



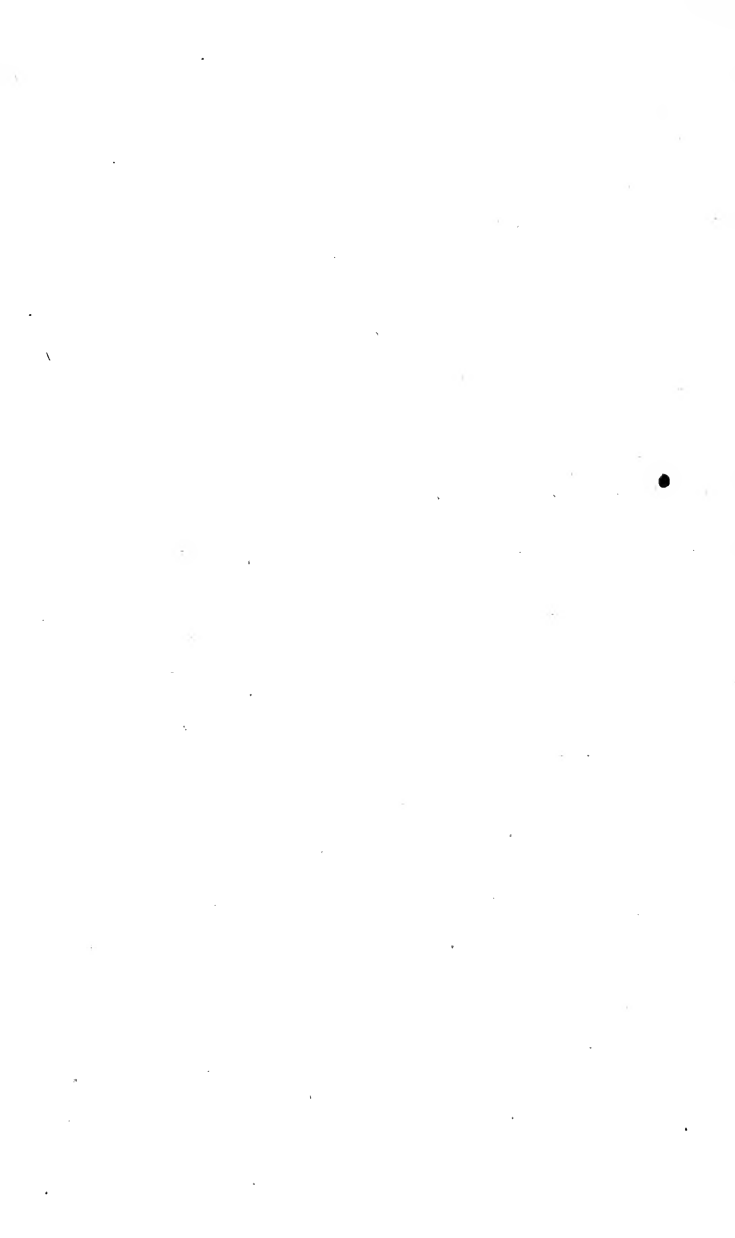
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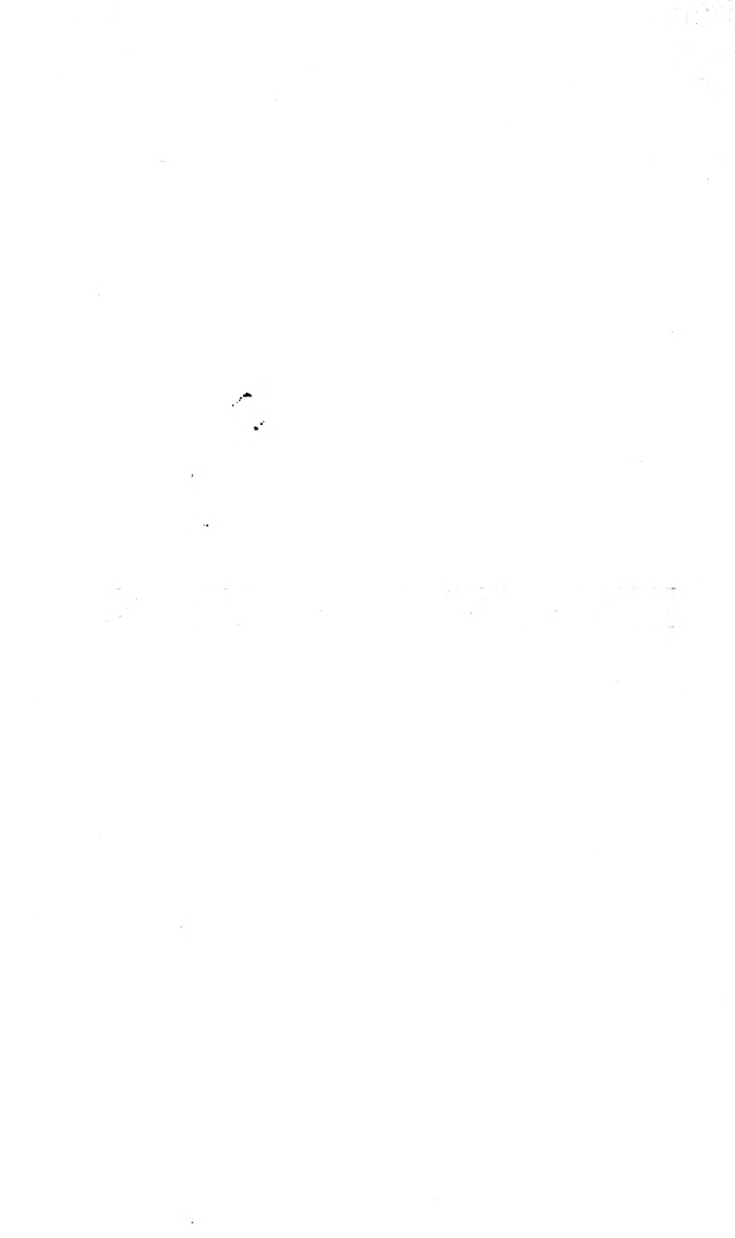
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Household consecration

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HOUSEHOLD CONSECRATION.



HOUSEHOLD
CONSECRATION.

BY

NATHANIEL E. JOHNSON,

PASTOR OF THE THIRD FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

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PREFACE.

THE time has arrived when the subject of Household Consecration is to be more thoroughly studied, understood, and practised, than at any former period. An institution founded upon imperishable reasons, and animated by principles which control the destinies of our race, must, in the progress of mankind towards the ages of universal Christianity, be more fully displayed and divinely honored. The rise of Sabbath schools, Bible classes, and infant schools; the publication of books on the domestic relations; the formation of maternal associations; the history of revivals, as written in the biography of departed worthies, and in our own delightful experience; have conspired to arouse the Church of God to a deeper and livelier faith in the covenant of consecration.

The author has, for years, watched with intense interest the operations of divine Providence and grace, in reference to this ordinance of the Church, and has become animated with the firm and joyful belief, that its power and virtue have not at all been developed in the fulness of their splendor. As this interest has led him occasionally to speak of it to others, he has been delighted to find, as if by one common influence, the minds of many devoted

ministers and Christians watching it with the same eagerness, and rejoicing in the same convictions. Under these impressions, he feels constrained to exert such influence as he may possess, to turn the attention of greater numbers to this subject.

He has, therefore, resolved to employ the press, as hitherto he has often employed the pulpit, to communicate to his fellow Christians his views and feelings respecting the consecration of households to God. [In several successive chapters the divine origin of the practice of infant dedication ; the fundamental and perpetual reasons of its institution ; the designed application of its principles to all nations and ages ; the ancient and the modern form, by which the faith of the Church in these principles has been designated ; the utility of this ordinance, and its relations to all the interests of future generations, will be presented for the consideration of all Christian professors, and especially for those who already practise it.] The fact, that this subject has awakened so much controversy, has made many lovers of peace among its friends averse to its frequent discussion. This aversion has operated to exclude it from the pulpit ; and this exclusion from the pulpit, to cause even those who practise it to slumber over its spiritual principles and ecclesiastical importance. In this slumber many households have fearfully suffered. The rich and healthy influences of this institution of ages have neither been fully experienced, nor, when partially experienced, duly appreciated. Had this subject received attention according to its merits, instead of being considered as scarcely contained in the Scriptures, it would have been

regarded as intermingled with the whole current of inspiration ; instead of being considered as an ordinance merely harmless, it would have been recognized as an arrangement, around which the deepest plans of divine Providence have taken root, and on which the great multitude of precious promises have bloomed and clustered. Indeed, there is good reason to believe, that had this ordinance been preserved in its original purity, the dark ages could never have intervened ; and had it not fallen into disuse, the reformation could scarcely have been impeded ; and had it, to the present time, preserved its spirituality, the world would have been filled, ere this, with the influence of a pure Christianity.

The writer is aware that this will be considered, even by many of its friends, as extravagant language. By those who have regarded it as a superstitious and frivolous ceremony, it will be considered as an outrage upon the principles of all sober reasoning. He wishes them, however, so far to suspend their decision, as to consider calmly the views and reasons which, to his own mind, present these assertions as the language of truth and soberness. He does not expect to convince, or impress those who do not read, or, reading, do not reflect, or, reflecting, do not pray. To those, however, who are willing to study the great permanent arrangements of divine Providence, to ponder the history of the Church, to contemplate the everlasting covenant, and admit the full force of parental responsibility, he feels assured that a thorough examination of this subject will result in a conscious justification of his strongest language. If this great theme shall thus obtain a stronger

hold upon the spirit of prayer now rising in the Church ; if this little book shall excite believing minds to think, and abler minds to preach and write, respecting that great theme, until it shall rise in its magnitude upon the vision of the Church ; then will the author rejoice in the thought that he has not written in vain. Encouraging this hope—a hope derived from having already presented these views in other methods, he commits this volume to the examination of the Christian public and to the blessing of the God of truth.

HOUSEHOLD CONSECRATION.

CHAPTER I.

Fundamental principles. The constitution of the moral universe. The constitution of the family state.

THE consecration of households to God, has been practised by the great body of the Church ever since the time of Abraham. That it originated in the wisdom of God, and is emphatically a divine plan, admits of direct and positive proof. This institution must have its fundamental reasons. Its antiquity evinces their power, and its divine origin, their justice. We shall therefore proceed to inquire,

What foundation there is in the constitution of things for the practice of household consecration.

1. There is a natural foundation for it *in the constitution of the moral universe.*

In that constitution *God has claimed the supreme right of property in matter, and has revealed himself the supreme and exclusive proprietor of mind.* This right is original, independent, absolute, and universal. It is inalienable and indestructible. It is Jehovah's prerogative, peculiarly, exclusively, and forever. In the system of moral government which he has established, for eternity, he has involved this claim, and committed himself to maintain it among angels and men. It is wrought into every living glory of heaven, and acknowledged in every celestial song. It is poured in upon man through all the testimony of natural religion, and all the ordinances of revealed. It pervades

all his circumstances and relations. It is placed upon him on his first introduction to existence. Creative power hath started a new mind on its endless career, and ought not that mind to be speedily consecrated to God? The divine right is in it. The divine claim is upon it. Man, therefore, should hasten to acknowledge them; and that acknowledgment by the proper persons, in the proper manner, is consecration. Thus, in the constitution of the moral universe lies one fundamental reason. There is, moreover, another: *That mind is ordained to exert an influence over mind universally and forever.*

The moral sentiments and feelings of immortal minds must have channels of mutual communication, and when communicated, must produce similar or diverse sentiments and feelings in associated minds.

The peculiar desirableness of an intelligent and immortal universe must consist in the capacity for mutual and influential communion. In consequence of this capacity, the universe of created and immortal mind will be able to study the perfections of God, and mutually to exercise their feelings of approbation and delight, as he shall condescend to reveal more and more clearly, through eternity, his nature, his character, and his glory. In consequence of this capacity, they can understand, appreciate, love, and elevate each other. God may thus cast over the mighty universe of mind flash after flash of his radiant glory, as his benevolent plan shall be unfolded, and thus educate, for an immensity of mutual happiness, his obedient offspring. That whole plan is one system of influence, *mind acting upon mind*, uncreated intelligence influencing in law, and in grace, created intelligences—and created minds influencing each other. This great principle of the moral universe has much to do with the practice of infant consecration. The design of that ordinance is to secure the influence of *mind over mind in God's behalf.*

So far, therefore, as it is adapted in itself to promote that design, and so far as God has determined to employ it for this purpose : so far, moreover, as it asserts his righteous and absolute claim to property in universal mind, it is rationally based on the constitution of the moral universe itself.

2. There is a natural reason for this ordinance in the domestic constitution.

God has there given mind influence over mind in a most intense and responsible degree. The parties are, first, two beings, the parents ; and a third being, the child ; and all immortal. They are introduced into a state of moral probation ; and on the character formed and developed in their probationary state, depends their eternal destiny. The parental minds combined, are placed in circumstances calculated to give them an unrivalled degree of influence over the mind of the child. The ardent and mutual affection between the parties ; the complete superiority of the parents to the child in every intellectual acquirement ; the entire dependence of the child on them for its opinions concerning itself, the world, and its God ; the habitual intercourse existing between them on the most ordinary occasions ; the power of securing the additional influence of the elder children over the younger, in harmony with that of the parents : all these circumstances united, conspire to furnish the parents with an almost absolute control over the earlier habits and opinions of their offspring. Such, then, is the construction of the family state, and such the moral influences exerted in the intimacies of its bosom. There the first issues of moral character are nurtured—the earliest impulses sent forth upon human minds and hearts begin to flow. There the first affection in an eternal series is warmed into conscious existence. There the destinies of nations are cradled. There, in the smiles, the tears, the

playfulness, and the laws of home, the great moral history of human nature is portrayed in living hieroglyphics. They indeed form an essential part of it.

This constitution, with all its springs of influence, was designed by its great Author for the purpose of forming character for the confirmed glories of eternity. It was ordained before the fall. It was adapted to preserve the choicest influences of holy parents, unimpaired, and to send them on accumulating through successive millienniads. The prophet Malachi asserts, that although God had the residue of the Spirit, he established the marriage relation between two individuals *that he might seek a godly seed.* This was the definite and avowed object of the family state itself. For this, its living fountains were opened; its deep and thrilling intimacies awakened, its physical, intellectual, and moral relations founded. These being universal, entering into the experience of every individual, were adapted to constitute a most permanent, affecting, and influential medium of communication, from heart to heart, throughout the race. It was adapted to make the wide brotherhood of human nature one broad ocean of affection, lying open with all its waves to the perpetual breath of truth: to the congenial impulses of the purest and sublimest motives. Thus its replenishing fountains of forming influence were to gush forth through all time, and thus its spiritual tides were to heave onward through eternity. It was on this constitution, that the Sanctifier would have taken his seat, in extending his preserving grace over unfallen probation. These were the cords which, thus pervading innumerable minds were placed in the hands of Adam, and were to convey, through their whole extent, life and peace, or death and woe, according as he should touch them with the unction of obedience, or with the poison of rebellion.

Had our first parents held fast their allegiance, and ex-

erted all their influence to form their children to holiness ; had death remained a stranger to our race ; and even down to the present time had the ancient patriarchs lived to exert a holy influence, and the collected wisdom of six thousand years remained in its accumulated treasures to instruct the present generation ; had there been growing also by its side ten thousand friendships, family alliances, long cherished intimacies, and ever kindling, ever strengthening attachment : O, then, in what heavenly places would the innocent child of beauty have inhaled its earliest impressions. Yet such was the tendency and the prospect, before sin entered, “and with it death with all our woe.”

The institution of infant consecration, therefore, is founded in this great Providential arrangement, of placing mankind in successive generations. God could have created all men at once, and made us all contemporaries, instead of all descendants of Adam and Eve. He saw best, however, in his infinite wisdom, to constitute the parental relation, and connect with this constitution such a powerful system of influence and responsibilities. Does there not, then, a special reason at once appear, why parents, entrusted with such a charge as the education of an immortal mind for an eternal residence in heaven, should be required to give a solemn pledge for the faithful discharge of their trust ? Would it not accord with the immense interests connected with their influence to secure that influence for the eternal welfare of the child ? Would it not be important to make deep the impression of the infinite value of the young immortal ? In view of the grand object of the domestic constitution, therefore, we discern a most urgent reason for the divine institution of household dedication. It evidently has no trivial origin—it has relations of most impressive and enduring importance, and seems at once to be seated in the deep foundations of human nature.

CHAPTER II.

Fundamental principles. The consequences of the apostasy. The gracious design of God to bless parent faithfulness.

THE strength and justice of this institution in its fundamental principles will be farther apparent, if we consider,

3. The consequences of the apostasy on the human character and the domestic constitution. Without controversy, those consequences in themselves are tremendous. It is now certain that every child, in forming his character for the judgment, will fit himself for everlasting destruction. Since the earliest affections of the infant are supremely selfish, he will invariably resist the claims of God, at their first presentation, and persist in his rebellion until it becomes habitual and eternal, unless through divine grace he is renewed, forgiven, and prepared for heaven. In addition to this, his native and voluntary depravity, he will certainly be surrounded by evil and vicious examples; he will certainly be tempted to the vicious indulgence of his constitutional propensities, he will certainly see much, even in the holiest parents, which he cannot imitate with safety, and finally he will inevitably be exposed to the wiles of the grand adversary—the original, successful, and universal tempter. Call now to mind the principle of *influence—mind influencing mind* on moral subjects—and also the nature of the family constitution, giving to such influence an intense and unrivalled sway, and you will at once perceive that in these appalling circumstances the parents are placed on either side like two guardian angels. They, if their own example be evil, will confirm, strengthen, and foster the evil habits of their child. If they do not instruct him in the

knowledge of God, he will grow up ignorant and impenitent. If they do not guard him from the contamination of evil and seductive examples—if they do not endeavor to enlist his feelings on the side of the true God—if they, above all, should inculcate views of God and religion fundamentally erroneous, they will exert a deep, continual, and efficacious influence in fitting their child for confirmed irreligion in time, and endless destruction when *time* shall be no more. This fearful influence will issue, not from a studied design to exert it, but from their neglect of pious duties ; from their love for worldly pleasures ; from their vain conversation. The character formed under such influence will of course reproduce itself in the next generation, and thus float down for ages, bearing with it an accumulating weight of guilt and mourning. Thus the institution of household relations, so admirably calculated to perpetuate holiness through successive ages ; so much like Paradise in all its original tendencies, is made, by man's depravity, the engine of transmitting evil dispositions and habits. The grand deceiver has only to poison the domestic fountain, in order to mingle his agency in the vast concerns of men, and cover the world with his own luxuriant and congenial harvest. The passions and the selfishness of men, bursting forth amidst innumerable occasions of excitement, have always required the most efficient restraints, even for the preservation of the common interests of society.

How often, indeed, the most weighty considerations, the most affecting motives, which either time or eternity can furnish, are like the green withes of Sampson, or the fetters of the Gadarenian demoniac. It is, therefore, manifest, that since this controlless depravity is so universal ; since it spreads through all the avenues of human action ; since especially in the family circle these depraved minds are most intimately connected ; since thus there are indissoluble

cords of influence binding all generations together, sin, once introduced, will spread like fire in the dry and thick forest. If, therefore, any thing is to be done for the restoration of man to holiness, the early sanctification of the domestic influences would of course be regarded as a prominent and all-important measure. Unless grace *had* interposed, the augmenting depravity of man would have overwhelmed the human race with one universal and impervious darkness. The eruptions of depravity in different generations would have buried the mortal and spiritual interests of man under ten thousand cemented incrustations. If, then, restoring mercy were to exert at all her benevolent offices in our behalf, she would be directed by all right understanding of the permanent plans of God, to apply her energies to those cords of influence which bind the ages together. If she would elevate a sinking world, or even transiently suspend it, from the cavernous ruin beneath, she must apply her lever *here*. The nature of moral influence in itself ; its intense *action* in the domestic circle ; and above all, its appalling perversion through man's entire depravity, demand, therefore, that the *parental agency* be secured on the side of God's truth, in order permanently to establish any system of restoration. The work of restoration must employ these original and all-pervading energies ; and the system of gracious administration must be founded in these ever during and all-controlling principles. These principles are wrought into the very constitution of the moral universe, and into the whole structure of that fearful *edifice—human nature*—in its *growth of generations*. Through all the joints and timber and compartments of this edifice, the permeating presence of evil agencies has left its monuments of possession. What shall be done ? The plague is raging : The prospective atonement has rendered forgiveness possible, if the hearts of men are changed, and if the sinful race

can be brought to repentance. The contrivances of mercy here commence their direct operation upon the moral condition of man. It was reasonable that the holy Agent of grace should prepare himself a passage through this thoroughfare of moral influence. It was reasonable that He should connect his arrangements for restoring holiness, with the same principles which were first designed for perpetuating holiness had our race never revolted. It was reasonable that in order to subdue the power of the devil, he should attack the strong holds, which he had erected for himself, out of these *very principles*. It was the more reasonable that this should be done, when the ravages which death was making among the guilty race, and especially when their imminent exposures, were considered. It was the dictate of reason, of benevolent necessity even, that some direct and well adapted course of effort should be commenced, in reference to the renovation of children.

If such a course of effort were to be commenced, where could the eye of merciful visitation rest, if not upon *parental influence*? How could that influence be secured, even in the case of regenerated parents, better than by requiring from them such a pledge as should give them a powerful sense of their responsibilities; connected with such promises as should encourage them amidst their parental anxieties? Therefore, in presenting the original reasons for establishing this practice, we adduce,

4. The design of God to dispense spiritual blessings in connection with parental faithfulness. The principles already contemplated illustrate the reasonableness and propriety, of such a plan. The actual existence of such a design, as an enduring principle of divine government, will now be contemplated. That God has always proceeded according to this general arrangement is evident from the earliest records of his gracious deeds. It is evident

from that history, even in view of the progress of wickedness. Consider now the primeval operations of grace. After the fall, the promise of a Saviour was made to our first parents ; a Saviour who was to be their descendant. When, therefore, after the murder of Abel, the birth of Seth occurred, the believing mother of us all seems to have looked upon him in the remembrance and application of the merciful promise. From him the Messiah eventually descended. In the progress of mankind through the antediluvian period, we find two distinct classes mentioned, viz. the sons of God and the sons of men. From the fact that pious patriarchs of those days were the descendants of Seth ; combined with the fact that the intermarriages of the two classes prepared the way for the universal corruption of the whole earth, we are authorized to infer that the distinction between the two classes was a distinction between the *pious and impious families*. The patriarchs in the line of Seth were the leaders among the sons of God, while those of Cain were undoubtedly the leaders among the sons of men. The names of Enos, Enoch, Methusaleh, and Noah, designate the first ; and those of Cain, Lamech, Tubal-cain, are characteristic of the other.

What an age of patriarchal moral power was that. The longevity of those men enabled them to exert an unrivalled agency over their descendants. Hundreds of years rolled away, and still the venerable patriarch was there. How must the aged Cain have looked, after the spirit of murder had drawn its lines on his countenance for hundreds of years. If he continued unrenewed, his memory must have been loaded with a catalogue of sins like the record of an empire, and in the aspect of his multiplied descendants he could behold his own scornful likeness forming, and his own terrible example applauded. For a while the sons of God enjoyed, from their longevity, the same advantages.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam in the line of Seth, was contemporary with Adam himself, for the space of three hundred and eight years. Methusaleh, his son, enjoyed the instructions of the heavenly Enoch for three hundred years, and was able to extend them, after his father's wonderful translation, for six hundred and ninety-five years longer! What a sublime spectacle, to have seen the aged Methusaleh, training up the young Noah, his grandson, and watching with tearful eye the labor of Noah in building the mysterious ark. The main channels of grace were certainly along the line of this sanctified parental and patriarchal influence. The object of this arrangement was to take advantage of the original family constitution, and establish it with its perpetual influences over the world. The time, however, for the complete accomplishment of this object, had not then arrived—may I not say, has not yet arrived. God, for wise reasons, perhaps that the destructive nature of unholy agency might be more fully exhibited, permitted the attractions of the world to seduce from the family allegiance the sons of God. The righteous and the wicked began to mingle in families. The descendants of such marriage connections copied the more agreeable fashions of the licentious world; the barriers were broken down, and the impious opinions and example of the wicked obtained currency and ascendancy around the homes and the hearths of the saints. One holy patriarch after another went down to the grave. The spirit of grace forsook the altar-places which once he delighted to overshadow, and a deep-minded, dark-hearted race of giant men controlled, with violence and oppression, the abandoned world. When God had suffered this state of things to exist, until the full tendencies of perverted family influence were fearfully exhibited, until it resulted in the production of a countless race of old, experienced criminals, gigantic in stature and proudly

intelligent in doing evil ; grovelling in imagination ; base in purpose ; unrestrained in conduct ; he announced his design to limit the days of man's probation to a much shorter period, and to destroy the whole of the antediluvian race—Noah and his family excepted. How strongly does the story of those ancient days evince the existence of a design already stated, to *make the family relation the main channel of grace*. After the deluge, the settlement of the human race was again commenced, in the family of Noah. Here, moreover, the evidence is equally convincing of the existence of such an arrangement. The descendants, especially of Shem and Japhet, appear to have included the *piety of those ages*. The art of war was introduced, probably, by Nimrod, a descendant of Ham. It is very clear that idolatry also originated with the descendants of Cush, the son of Ham. Egypt and Canaan, countries peopled by the descendants of Ham, show in the inspired record of the character and curse, the power of the family constitution when perverted.

The evidence of existing piety from the time of Noah to Abraham is all to be obtained from the history of the race of Shem and Japhet. So far, then, during a period of 2000 years, there is evidence that the great amount of all the dispensations of grace has been on the *principle of blessing children through the influence of believing parents*. These facts will, moreover, explain the reason annexed to the second commandment, and through that explanation will shed much admonition and encouragement around the family relations. They will explain how it is that God may visit the iniquities of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate him. He has only to leave the wicked parents to exert their natural influence on their own children, and withhold his regenerating grace from those households whose parents never seek it in the

behalf of their offspring. He will eventually punish the children themselves only for their own iniquities, yet their course of action was influenced by the examples and instructions of their ungodly parents. There is, however, much to encourage, as well as much to admonish the parent. *For he does bless with his converting grace the households of his faithful people.* He does bless the holy patriarch's heavenly influence. He does, actually, as we have seen, bestow his gracious visitations according to this rational, permanent, and independent arrangement.

Let me also here remark, with grateful adoration, how much, according to this principle, his goodness exceeds his severity ! While his curse that is in the house of the wicked may be removed in the third or fourth generation, his gracious design and its consequent train of spiritual blessings, may extend through a thousand generations of those that love him. Thus by carrying out the spirit and principle of this general design in the special work of his grace, all the precious promises will be accomplished, and the original constitution of the family state will thus be restored, to pour its millennial influences over the world, until

"The rose of Eden blooms again for man."

If, then, the design which we have stated does exist as a permanent gracious arrangement, how perfectly proper that an institution should be founded, in which the parent should *promise* to fulfil his high religious obligations, and in which the covenant-keeping God should promise to sustain him among his overwhelming responsibilities ? Such an institution is infant consecration, founded originally by the direct appointment of Jehovah. Whether it ought now to be continued—whether the form of consecration should be water baptism, are questions hereafter to be examined ;

but that infant dedication was originally ordained by Jehovah himself, cannot of course be denied by any believer in the Bible. The considerations already suggested will show that the ordinance was based on the most *important reasons*.

CHAPTER III.

The Abrahamic covenant. Terms. Promises, seal, perpetuity.

WE have seen that the ordinance of infant consecration is from heaven; and like all other divine institutions, hath a strong foundation—composed of the great elementary truths of moral government and family constitution; a foundation laid amidst the ruins of the fall, by the hand of mercy, embodying the great fact, *that God designs to dispense spiritual blessings to children in connection with parental faithfulness*. The existence of this design, as a permanent plan, is manifest already by the consideration that even before any external form of consecration was enjoined, the transactions of grace had proceeded for two thousand years, in uniform accordance with its principles. The time at length arrived, when this design was to be brought more prominently to view, and when its principles were to become more powerful in action. The experience of ages had manifested, not to God, but in man's history, for man's future use, the importance of some distinct and solemn pledge, which should be adopted to secure the parental faithfulness, and with which the fulfilment of the gracious design was so intimately connected. At the calling of Abraham, idolatry had become firmly, and generally established, and the worship of the true God was sinking into disuse. How fearfully, in these facts of ancient days, is the contagious power of depravity exhibited! What lessons of instruction will be communicated to the ages to come! what impressive admonitions to all worlds against

the introduction of sin ! An Eden lost ; a world destroyed ; a new world corrupted. The voice of God calls from that burning portion of history, *Beware of sin.*

God, however, was, in the course of all these events, developing the truth of his law, and the arrangements of his grace. He ordered the whole current of human affairs in view of the advent of Christ. This great event, on which the interest of a world depended, was now to be connected with the posterity of Abraham, and a nation was to be provided as a cradle for the Saviour, and a nursery for the Church. For this purpose, and in view of all results consequent upon the establishment of Christianity, Abraham was called to go out from his native land, a lonely pilgrim, yet an heir of glorious promises. He was assured that in his posterity all the families of the earth should be blessed. He trusted in God, and by faith, saw the day of Christ and was glad. Then it was, that God, from a regard to the interests of mankind in all ages, revealed to him his gracious plan, and established the everlasting household covenant. This covenant, like the rainbow in its humid beauty, was to shine illustrious by the living principles which were essential to its formation. As this covenant combines in itself the aforesaid fundamental principles, and establishes, until the period of its own abolition, the practice of infant consecration, I shall solicit the candid attention of the reader to the following topics :

I. The nature and provisions of the Abrahamic covenant.

II. The right of God's people, through all ages and nations, to its invaluable privileges ; and,

III. The evidence that baptism is now, in the place of circumcision, the appointed seal of that everlasting covenant.

I. The covenant, whose nature and provisions we are

now to examine, is contained in the 17th chapter of Genesis.

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee; and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that

soul shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant." 1-14.

In order to understand the nature and provisions of this covenant, we must consider *its terms, its promises, and its seal.*

1. What were the terms of the covenant ?

In order to enter this covenant it was essential that Abraham *should give credible evidence of his faith.* It was after his faith had been well known, and well tried, that his public connection with it was formed. Saving faith, or vital godliness, was required in the language of its introduction, "*I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abraham fell on his face.*" He exercised unwavering faith in the divine word, and consented to the holy terms, which were essential to his admission.

As this covenant, moreover, respected his offspring as well as himself, it was essential that he *should exercise that faith in a course of parental faithfulness.* Thus, shortly after this transaction, the Lord, referring to this very household promise, said, "*For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him ; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*" Gen. xviii. 19. It is manifest from this, that God intended to bless his posterity according to his parental faithfulness ; and that the promise to him, in behalf of his household, was made on this condition.

2. What were the promises of this covenant ?

The promises made to Abraham on the conditions above specified, respected both himself and his offspring. The grand object of this covenant, in all its bearings, was, *the conveyance of spiritual blessings.* Of this, the phrases, "to

be a God to thee," "I will be their God," are conclusive proof. This was the language of God through all the Scripture when the gifts of saving grace were promised.

Jer. xxxi. 33. "*This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, saith the Lord ; I will put my law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*" In Ezekiel xi. 19, 20 ; xxxvi. 25-28 ; xxxvii. 26, 27 ; the same expressive language is employed for the same purpose. Thus, indeed, the new and everlasting covenant is emphatically expressed. The same language is as full of grace and truth when used to Abraham, as when used on any subsequent occasion. Not only the scriptural use, but the grand idea of the expression itself, "I will be *thy* God," obliges us to this interpretation. What more can any immortal spirit possess, than to have the great God his sure and eternal portion ? What bestowments of grace can be imagined not included here ? Nor is it an objection to these views, that temporal blessings are promised, in the context, as well as spiritual. This also, elsewhere, the Bible promises : "*No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.—I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread:—Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of the life which is to come.*" The Lord is the guardian of his people in every interest, whether temporal or spiritual ; and the angel that encampeth round about them, is not less the minister of his providence than of his grace.

This glorious covenant *conveys these spiritual blessings to the believer himself.* His *regeneration*, his saving faith, his personal obedience to the truth, is presupposed, as essential to his entrance upon these covenant privileges. The personal promise to him, as a believer, insured, 1st. Pardon ; 2d. Sanctification ; 3d. Perseverance. For all these,

together with all needful temporal good, are included in the phrase, *I will be thy God*, as explained by the Bible itself. His own regeneration is not promised, because it is itself a prerequisite to an entrance upon the covenant title. This being supposed, these other blessings the covenant insures to him absolutely and unconditionally, as a believer in Jesus Christ. His faith is the connecting bond, which unites him to these blessings of adoption. By thus securing the persevering holiness of the believer himself, it forms a sure foundation for its farther procedures respecting his household. Therefore, it promises to *convey the blessings of grace to his offspring, on condition of his parental faithfulness*. The promise, as extended to his children, included regeneration in addition, and as the grand prerequisite to all the others. A promise so rich, was made only to living faith, and in proportion to the degree and eminence of parental faithfulness. It placed the redeemed head of a fallen household on the rock of salvation, and roused him, by most thrilling motives, to attempt, while it encouraged him to expect, according to his operative faith, their certain redemption also. This promise to the believing parent was conditional, and graduated in its gracious meaning, according to the measure of faith which should be manifested in the domestic constitution. Should the parent's light be obscured, and his conduct be grossly inconsistent; should he break the covenant engagement; should he fail, like Eli, to restrain his children; should he be grossly deficient in any parental duty, he has reason to expect the most disastrous consequences to his family. On the other hand, should he perform the conditions of the covenant; should he exercise the higher degrees of faith, in its promises; should he avail himself of all its possible resources—he may expect, not their salvation merely, but their distinguished usefulness, their exalted temporal prosperity, and

their eminence of celestial glory. On this subject God hath always delighted to make his grace illustrious. His voice, to the confiding parent is, continually, Come up higher!

There is one point here which should be distinctly *marked*. That all the spiritual blessings which the believer is to expect for his children he *must expect on the ground of this special promise, and through the special visitations of the Holy Ghost*. God has designed to employ the wonderful resources of the family state in his own cause; but he means to have us understand, that after all this adaptation of means, it is only through the special influences of grace, provided in the covenant promise, that the blessing shall come.

3. What was the import of the seal?

The seal itself, in its great original import, was spiritual. The apostle declares it "*a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised.*" By the command of God it was placed upon the parent and the child. When placed upon the *parent*, it was a token of God's claim upon him, and of God's personal promise to him, and of his professed submission to the claim, and living faith in the promise. When placed upon the *child*, it was a token of God's claim upon the child; of God's promise to the father on behalf of the child; and also, of the father's consent to the claim, and faith in the promise. In both cases, the entire consecration of the individual on whom the seal was placed, by the faith of the father, was necessarily implied. When God said, *I will be thy God*, the submission to the seal was the father's *amen*. When he said, "*and of thy seed after thee,*" the sealing of the child was that same father's *amen* to this promise also. It implied, therefore, a pledge, in the first instance, of his own entire consecration to Jehovah; and in the second, that he as sin-

cerely consecrated his household as he did himself; that he himself would walk before God with a perfect heart, and that he would thus command his household after him. The promise, on the part of God, to him, was like that to the jailer, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thine house.*" The promise, on his part, to God, was like that of Joshua, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

The seal of the Abrahamic covenant, therefore, when placed upon the father and his family, dedicated all the domestic relations, influences, and interests, to the Supreme God. When placed upon the father, it publicly attested that glorious arrangement of saving grace which was made between God and his soul. When placed upon the child, it was a significant sign of that same gracious arrangement, in its bearing, through a conditional promise, on the infant. When the consecrated infant himself believed, it then became to him a token of his interest in the promise of pardon, sanctification, and preserving grace. Then, and not till then, he also, personally, for himself and offspring, entered into covenant with God. The Abrahamic covenant, with its *terms*, its *promises*, and its *seal*, was a glorious ecclesiastical administration of the covenant of grace. It included the provisions of that covenant—and more also, unless the covenant of grace be defined, as *including in itself the conditional provisions of the Abrahamic covenant, respecting the households of believers*. The covenant of grace has not generally been thus defined. Perhaps it may, more correctly, be termed the covenant of grace, *brought into public profession, and extending its promise to parents in behalf of their children, through certain appropriate conditions*. The great ideas are the same in either case, and the conclusions are precisely the same, respecting parental duties and parental hopes. The application of the

seal, both to the parent and the child, was the appointed manner in which the ancient believer professed his faith, and solemnized his household consecration.

The right of circumcision was well adapted as a seal of that faith which receives remission of sins through the shedding of blood, and professes a spiritual and internal change. Hence the frequent application of the term to the moral state of men.—“The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart.”—“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye.” There was also a special propriety in the selection of circumcision, as the seal, because it prefigured a bleeding Saviour to come; and preserved the nation of Israel distinct from other nations, until the Messiah appeared. The last suggestion will explain particularly the reason of its adoption, and will vindicate the propriety of a change of the seal, when the gospel was to be published through all the world, and the many nations were to hail the Chaldean Shepherd as their father. The advantages of this seal were sufficient, therefore, to compensate for the disadvantage of its application only to one sex, when it is remembered that the other sex was considered as characterized and included in the household, as surely as if any other seal had been selected: and that the circumcision would harmonize well with the Jewish ceremonies, with which, for ages, it was to be associated, and might be easily exchanged for another, when the Christian dispensation, with its more liberal privileges, should commence.

The same general course of reasoning will explain the propriety of especially including in the promise, the land of Canaan, as the everlasting inheritance of the literal descendants of Abraham. It was a promise subordinate to the main design, like the establishment of the Jewish na-

tion, and connected in this manner with the coming of the Mediator, in the fulness of time, on which event the power and validity of all the gracious arrangements depended.

On the whole, we arrive at the following unembarrassed conclusions :—

1. That Abraham entered into this *covenant* after having given evidence of his faith.

2. That this covenant was a divine arrangement established by Jehovah himself, with which Abraham, as a *believer*, was called to comply.

3. That the terms of this covenant were personal faith, and parental fidelity.

4. That all the promises of this covenant were made in and *through* the glorious Mediator.

5. That this covenant *promised spiritual blessings* as the main scope of its provisions, and temporal blessings as subordinate and collateral.

6. That it promised spiritual blessings to Abraham, absolutely on his own behalf, and conditionally on behalf of his offspring.

7. That Abraham was required to seal this covenant by circumcising himself and his household ; and that circumcision on these principles was personal and household consecration.

8. That the same *mode* of consecration was used for his children which was used for himself.

9. That this circumcision was the appointed *token*, or memorial, between God and Abraham of this spiritual covenant.

10. That this covenant is repeatedly declared to be everlasting.

The proof of the final conclusion is in the language of the covenant itself. I will make between me and thee an everlasting covenant. In 1st Chron. xvi. 15, 17, that co-

venant is portrayed in the following manner: "*Be ye mindful always of his covenant, of the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Even the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant.*" These assertions respecting the perpetuity of this covenant correspond with the natural conclusion which results from the permanent character of its fundamental principles. What can be more valuable to the believer, during any period of time, than a full assurance of his title to its unsearchable privileges?

CHAPTER IV.

The right of Christians to the Abrahamic covenant. Covenant not abolished—confirmed—transferred, at the expense of the Jews, to the Gentiles.

WE shall now proceed to consider,

II. The right of God's people, through all ages and nations, to the invaluable privileges of the Abrahamic covenant.

The evidence that Christians are entitled to all the privileges of the Abrahamic covenant is abundant and convincing. In the Scriptures of truth a series of positions are maintained, which constitute, together, a most satisfactory proof of the perpetuity of that covenant, and of the right of Christians to its promises.

1. *That covenant has never been abolished.*

The truth of this sentiment might be strongly argued, from the fundamental principles upon which it was originally established. Not only the great reasons remain unchanged, but the institution is as well adapted to the circumstances of all ages and nations, as the age and nation of Abraham. The family constitution remains the same, with all its moral bearings, and the responsibilities of parents remain; and the design of God to bless believing parents in their consecrated households is incorporated into the living promises and procedures of God. If God has publicly recognized these principles, and this covenant, as a part of his perpetual system of administration, it is not to be supposed that he has now abandoned it. If, however, he has given up that covenant, some intimation of such relinquishment must be contained in the Scriptures. It may be well

to examine a few passages which are sometimes adduced to prove the abolition of the Abrahamic covenant. The language of Jeremiah xxxi. 31-33, is quoted for this purpose :

“ Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt ; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel : After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

That this text, however, does not assert the termination of the Abrahamic covenant, is evident from several considerations. The first is, that the covenant here said to be superseded, was a covenant formed hundreds of years after the existence of Abraham.—“ *The covenant which I made with your fathers in the day when I took them out of Egypt.*”

2. The apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, 8th and 9th chapters, quotes this passage, and explains it of the Jewish and Christian dispensations. The Levitical priesthood and the sacrifices, the tabernacle and its furniture, were all laid aside. These are particularly referred to by Paul, as matters appertaining to that covenant which was done away.

3. The *new covenant* is not called new, in distinction from the Abrahamic covenant, but from the civil and ecclesiastical establishments of the Jewish nation. A *new* dispensation had commenced, and the old was expected to vanish away. 4. Another consideration is, that the new covenant is expressed in almost the same language with the Abra-

hamic covenant. The main promise is the same, "I will be their God and they shall be my people." In it God promises to put his law in their hearts, and to prevent the final apostasy of his redeemed children from his service. This is the covenant of grace. The Abrahamic covenant breathes the same spirit, and is *the covenant of grace brought into public profession, and extending its promise to parents in behalf of their children*. This passage, therefore, strongly evinces that the ancient household covenant is not abolished.

The expression in Daniel ii. 44, is also produced by some, to prove that the two dispensations were in truth two distinct Churches ; or that the present Church commenced its existence with the advent of Christ. "*In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed.*" Are we to understand that God had no spiritual kingdom before the coming of the Saviour ? This we know is an unscriptural sentiment. Hundreds of years before the Messiah came, the harps of Judah had chanted the glories of the kingdom of grace. It should be considered, therefore, that this prophecy was spoken in view of the perishable kingdoms of earth ; and while Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, were successively overthrown, the prophet saw the pure gospel winning its way triumphant over the obstacles in its path, and finally established in a complete ascendancy throughout the world. There was, therefore, a propriety in calling the commencement of a new administration the setting up of a kingdom. Since, therefore, this passage cannot mean that God had no spiritual kingdom before ; since it cannot mean that one kingdom of God was destroyed in order to establish another, there being no intimation of this in the passage ; since, too, the interpretation we have suggested is the fair and obvious construction ; it is manifest that the passage does not authorize

the sentiment, that the Abrahamic covenant is abolished. If neither of these passages inculcate that doctrine, I am fully persuaded that it will not be found in the Bible.

The distinction we have made between the covenant made with Abraham, and extending its glorious promises to his children; and the covenant of national customs and ecclesiastical ceremonies, enjoined upon the Jews, is abundantly sanctioned. The covenant of Sinai gendereth to bondage, but that of faith is full of free and cheering promises. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. Isaac was a child consecrated to God under the sealed covenant, and was indeed a child of promise. By exercising the faith of his patriarchal father, he too could bring his children to the altar of consecration, and pledge a father's faithfulness, and plead Jehovah's grace.

As the destruction of the Jewish system of rites and ceremonies did not invalidate the original gracious covenant, so the enacting of those regulations did not disannul the promise. Hence the covenant of promise could remain when these superincumbent things were removed, to cheer us and bless us with all its undiminished privileges. Thus, in Gal. iii. 17, we read, "*And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*" Notwithstanding, then, any changes which may have occurred since, in the circumstances of the Jewish nation, the great and invaluable Abrahamic covenant retains its unchanging truth.

If, then, this covenant is founded on such imperishable reasons, if it is so well adapted to the necessities of our race throughout the revolutions of time, if it promises blessings of the soul to the parent in behalf of his immortal offspring, if it is proclaimed an everlasting covenant, and if it is no

where in sacred Scripture abolished, it certainly comes before us with a most impressive aspect.

2. *God has confirmed this covenant, instead of abolishing it.*

In the delightful comparison of Paul between Moses and Christ, this sentiment appears to be decidedly inculcated. Moses was a servant, and faithful in all his house, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. In all that Moses did, he acted not as a son, but as a servant; was not proprietor of the house, but merely a servant of the proprietor. Christ acts as a son; and he has more honor than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. According to this argument, Moses himself, considered spiritually, was the workmanship, *i. e.* the building of Christ. He himself was a part of that house in which he was called to serve. The apostle, however, declares, that we, *i. e.* believers, are *Christ's house*, and that Christ is *over his own house*; therefore Christ was over Moses, as he is over us, over ancient believers, over those of later ages, over all believers of every age, as constituting one spiritual body; one spiritual house, of which he is the head. According to this view of the subject, the Church has ever been one in both dispensations, and the covenant confirmed before of God in Christ, is thus confirmed through all time by the reigning glory of the Messiah. In Gal. iii. 15, we read, "Brethren, we speak after the manner of men. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." The covenant, then, which God made with Abraham, is confirmed unto every believer on the same terms, and is wisely calculated to waft the blessing from generation to generation. We are now prepared for the third position, that,

3. *This covenant is not only confirmed, but distinctly transferred, with all its privileges, to the Gentiles.*

The proof of this position is contained in many passages of scripture. In Gal. iii. 13, 14, it is said, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*"; for it is written, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*" The great doctrine of justification by faith, in the atoning Saviour, is here clearly taught, and in view of the general atonement the invitations of mercy have been sent out to the Gentile. The atonement was necessary in order that the Holy Spirit might consistently bestow his influences upon the human race, and therefore, it is through the doctrine of the atonement that the design of blessing the successive generations of men has been formed. When, therefore, the Saviour is said to have suffered, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, and that he might receive the promise, it is certainly meant that we also should be justified by the same faith, and that we should possess with him the promise of the Spirit in behalf of our children. This was the blessing which Abraham possessed, and this was the promise in which his parental heart delighted. The passage, therefore, is conclusive in proving that Gentile Christians are entitled to all the privileges of the ancient covenant. "*Know ye, therefore, that they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*" How explicit: how positive: how precious is the assurance! Gal. iii. 26-29: "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's,*

then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." This last verse most surely implies that all Christians are the spiritual seed of Abraham, and that therefore they are heirs of the promise with Abraham, and have the same title with him to all its privileges. In the fourth chapter of Romans, the admission of the Gentile believers, into these exalted privileges, is inculcated with great force, explicitness, and satisfaction. There it is asserted, that he received circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed.*

If, then, the promise to Abraham was, that God would be a God to him and to his seed after him; if he received this promise through *faith* in the Redeemer; if this implied great encouragement to him to labor for the spiritual welfare of his children; if this covenant is founded on immutable principles, and is not abolished, but solemnly confirmed; if the great embankments, which for ages had kept the waters of holy influence in one solitary channel, were torn away when the Saviour came, that the blessing of Abraham might flow to the Gentiles; and if, finally, every real believer is counted as a descendant of Abraham, and if the promise is sure to all his seed, is not the evidence abundantly decisive, as to the right of Christians to that same household promise, that same covenant of generations? There is, however, one more position, which will serve to make the argument more impressive.

4. *This covenant is not only bestowed upon the Gentiles, but it is even bestowed upon us at the expense of the Jews.*

The full import of this last statement may be seen in a candid exposition of the eleventh chapter of Romans. The Jews, the natural branches, are there represented as broken

off from their own olive-tree, and the Gentiles as taken from the wild olive-tree of nature, and grafted into the olive-tree of grace, into the Church of the living God, to be nourished by the root and fatness of new covenant privileges. No new olive-tree is planted, but the Gentiles are represented as grafted into the old olive-tree, into the same privileges which the Jews by their outrageous unbelief had forfeited.

If, now, any one wishes to gain just impressions of the value of this covenant, let him consider, 1st. *The poor Jews broken off and abandoned to perpetual unbelief and darkness.* From generation to generation the same hard-hearted infidelity travels on. No light seems to find its way into their spiritual condition, no arguments have power to dispel their delusions, no amount of evidence is equal to the work of conviction. Can any one look upon that long continued moral wreck, and not remember the apostolic prophecy? *Wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.* Can any mind study that mournful history, and not tremble at the thought of perverted family influence?

Yet, amidst these painful emotions, consider, 2d. *The power of the ancient covenant in securing their restoration!* God hath not finally cast away that people. Their delusions shall speedily vanish; their long, heavy night of thick darkness shall be turned into refulgent morning. For God will remember the covenant which he made with Abraham. In this respect, their tenacious observance of their Jewish rites and ceremonies; their preservation as a distinct people in all their wanderings; their universal abhorrence of idolatry, a sin to which their fathers were so much addicted: all these are scarcely less adapted to the doctrine of their restoration, than is their blindness or their obstinacy to the fulfilment of the terrible sentence of their righteous Judge.

If, then, it is a fact, that such judgments follow the perversion of these great covenant truths; if it be so that our only hope of redemption is in the far reaching grasp of that patriarchal covenant; if, through this most melancholy fall of theirs, salvation has come to the Gentiles; if, coming with no stinted measure, she has brought the fulness of all these heaven-born privileges, and poured them at our feet, shall we not prize an inheritance for ourselves and our offspring in that everlasting covenant? Shall we not feel ourselves bound by every persuasive motive to affix its *seal*—whatever that seal may be—upon our immortal children?

The conclusion to which we are conducted is, that since God has not abolished the Abrahamic covenant; since he has positively confirmed it in the gospel dispensation; since he has even bestowed it explicitly, with all its immunities, upon the Gentile believers; since, finally, he has even done this at fearful expense to the original proprietors themselves, it is the certain privilege of every believing parent to consecrate his children to God on the terms of that covenant; and it is his solemn duty to affix the appropriate token of *faith and promise* upon them, according to the example of the Church for almost four thousand years.

CHAPTER V.

The change of the seal. Circumcision abolished. Baptism substituted.

HAVING discussed the nature of the Abrahamic covenant, and the right of believers in all places and times to its glorious privileges, we shall proceed to prove,

III. *That baptism is now, in the place of circumcision, its authorized and appropriate seal.*

We hope it will be remembered, that the existence of *infant consecration*, as an institution of Heaven, founded on unchanging reasons, and secured by a perpetual covenant, whose duties and blessings are extended with the whole extent of the gospel itself, has been already abundantly proved. However, therefore, the present question may be determined, the duty of parents in *some form* to dedicate their households to God, is even in the present stage of the argument perfectly clear. It will be seen, moreover, that the facts and principles already established will not only harmonize with the sentiment, that *baptism is now the seal*, but will even constrain us to its adoption. We therefore consider it the duty of parents to consecrate their children to God *by baptism*, for the following reasons :

1. It is certain that *circumcision* is abolished. By this I do not mean that circumcision is abolished *merely* as a form of *infant consecration*, but as a seal of the covenant, either for adults or infants. It should be remembered that circumcision was for adults as well as for infants. Abraham dedicated himself to God in this form. When the

Christian dispensation commenced, the Jews, understanding that believing Gentiles were to be admitted to the Church, the *ancient Church*, with all its undiminished privileges—the *Jewish Church* even, for Christianity commenced its earliest establishments among the Jews, and Jews were its earliest and most successful preachers—thought that the Gentiles ought to be circumcised. The question was referred to the apostles; and they decided that this *yoke* was not to be put upon the Gentiles, because *it was a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*. This passage of course decides the case of the Gentiles. Circumcision is certainly abolished, so far as we are concerned. Hence the conclusion, that as we are introduced into all the rights and privileges of the children of Abraham, we are to consecrate our children to God, in the use of some other seal.

I am prepared to go farther, and say circumcision is abolished as far as Jewish Christians are concerned. The reasons assigned by the apostle for not requiring it among the Gentiles are equally valid for its abolition among the Jews—*which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear*. In this expression they did not consider circumcision *merely* as a form of *infant* consecration, but as a rite binding them, in the circumstances, to certain other rites and ceremonies, which constituted the ritual service of the old dispensation. *He that is circumcised is a debtor to keep the whole law*—i. e. to observe all those rights and ceremonies. As, therefore, circumcision had served this temporary purpose, of binding the ancient son of the sealed covenant to the heavy and cumbersome observances with which, for wise reasons, it was associated until the fulness of times, it was very reasonable that now, when that whole system of carnal ordinances was to be abolished, a new and better rite should be substituted, as a seal of the everlasting covenant, while this should be left gradually to vanish away. With these

scriptural and rational views, the whole history of the apostolic Church perfectly corresponds ; and all the language of apostolic scripture corroborates it. While, therefore, these reasons for its abolition existed, the reasons for the selection of that particular form had ceased to exist. If that form served to indicate the cleansing of sin by *blood*, now the blood of atonement had been already shed. If that form served to secure the coming of the Saviour as a descendant of Abraham by keeping the nation distinct, the Saviour had now come, and that particular purpose was no longer necessary. If that form had long been associated with the observance of the ceremonial law, now since the ceremonial law had expired, it was well that the association of the mind should be changed, and a new form, bearing a similar relation to the contents of the new dispensation, which this had borne to the old, and sustaining to the everlasting covenant itself all, and even more than all, the appropriateness which this had ever sustained, should be substituted in its place. Since, then, the covenant remains, with all its reasons, privileges, and authority, unabolished, confirmed, extended, and this at great expense, it must possess some appropriate and authentic seal. Since circumcision is displaced from that exalted honor, some other seal must have been provided. Whatever that new *seal* is, it is the duty and the privilege of the Christian parent to apply it to himself and his offspring, because he is an heir of that same gracious and unchanging covenant, and the application of its seal is the direct and public profession of faith in its provisions.

2. Whatever that new seal is, there is but one seal, one form of dedication, both for the parent and the child. This was the case in the ancient administration of the Abrahamic covenant. Then both the believing adult and his infant child were circumcised. Faith was an indispensable con-

dition on the part of Abraham, and his entrance into this ecclesiastical covenant was an act of solemn profession. He thereby declared his dependence for salvation on a Saviour to come, and dedicated by the same rite both himself and his household to the God of the covenant. His faith respecting his own justification, and respecting the promises of God to his children, each terminated upon Jesus Christ as its all-sufficient object. It was proper, therefore, that it should be expressed in the same manner, indicated by the same rite, and lay fast hold of the covenant by the same divinely appointed seal. Since, then, the spiritual covenant itself remains; since remaining, it must have some seal or token by which our consent to its arrangements shall be publicly given; and since the new seal must therefore be the same in the consecration of the child as in the consecration of the parent, it conclusively follows, that whatever rite or form is now the seal of the covenant to the believing adult, is of course to be applied to the consecration of his offspring.

3. Baptism by water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the seal of the covenant to all believers. That baptism is the ordinance by which the adult believer professes his faith in Christ, his dependence on the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, and his entire dedication of himself to the Most High, is a fact well known to all those who are at all familiar with the contents of the New Testament. "Go ye, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The numerous instances of baptism mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistolary addresses to those who are members of the Church, enforcing the obligation of their baptismal engagements, are sufficient proof

of the sentiment that baptism is the authorized mode of Christian consecration. That baptism is the *appropriate seal* of the gracious covenant, is an irresistible inference from the positions already established. We have proved that the covenant with Abraham was a spiritual covenant ; that its spiritual provisions are extended to the Gentiles, and that in baptism the believer expresses that faith by which he appropriates to himself its invaluable blessings, and therefore baptism is the seal to him of the covenant into which he enters. If, then, it is certain that this covenant requires the consecration of his children, and promises spiritual blessings to him on their behalf ; if the same seal is to be applied to the child which is applied to the adult, then the duty and the privilege of the Christian parent to dedicate his household to God by baptism is clearly and incontestably established. That baptism is now, in the place of circumcision, the appropriate seal, will be evident from a consideration of the *points of resemblance*.

Both are seals of the righteousness of faith. The doctrine of justification by faith in a Mediator has ever been the cardinal doctrine of the Church. The apostle Paul, when proving this fundamental sentiment, in view of those who had sought salvation in strict adherence to mere carnal observances, produces the example of all the holy men of old, showing that from the days of Abel to his own, the whole noble army of confessors were witnesses to the truth of his doctrine. Respecting Abraham he positively asserts, in Romans iv. 11, "That he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." Circumcision *was therefore* a seal of the *righteousness of faith*. The great doctrine of justification by faith alone was signified in it, and the covenant of mercy was thereby sealed between God and the believer. Need I even tarry to prove that *baptism is a seal of the*

righteousness of faith? "Believe and be baptized," "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." As anciently no adult could be circumcised without believing, so now no adult can be baptized without believing.

In the ancient days the believer professed faith in a Saviour to come: in the new dispensation the believer professes faith in a Saviour that has *already come*. In both cases the believer was justified by his faith, and the circumcision then was what the baptism is now, a seal of his gracious justification.

To each, faith is an indispensable condition in the same sense. The inquiry sometimes rises, How can the baptism of children be consistent with the command to *believe* and be baptized? An attention to the point of resemblance will answer the inquiry. Abraham could not be circumcised himself until he had given evidence of his faith. The unbaptized adult believer cannot now be baptized without giving evidence of *faith*. The commands to believe and be baptized in the New Testament are not addressed to infants, but to adult unbelievers. So under the old dispensation. The adult heathen who came to be circumcised as did Abraham, was to believe *first* and then to be circumcised. In this respect, therefore, the command, so far as it relates to adults, is precisely the same, requiring faith first, and then offering circumcision or baptism as a seal of the righteousness of the faith exercised previous to participation in the ordinance.

Nor is the resemblance less complete in respect to the consecration of children. The ancient believer presented his household, by circumcision, to that God to whom he had first, with inward sincerity and with external rite, consecrated himself. Even where the parent was himself a child of the covenant in his infancy, and circumcised at eight days old, he was expected, by living faith, to act when he

dedicated *his* offspring to the God of his fathers. Thus Isaac consecrated Jacob and Esau. Thus Jacob devoted his group of young patriarchs to the God of Abraham. Faith in the Shiloh of future times was essential to the acceptable performance of the severe but significant ceremony. Now if the positions we have taken be correct, and baptism is to be applied as a seal of the covenant to the children of believers, faith, of course, is professedly exercised by every parent who claims, in behalf of his household, the privilege of consecration. The practice of admitting parents, who merely assented to the confession of faith with the understanding, to present their households for baptism, was utterly unauthorized, and in direct violation of all the terms of the covenant. The plan of the half-way covenant, as it was called, was not only unauthorized, but it was a direct and sacrilegious perversion of these spiritual and glorious privileges. When the jailer heard the apostolic direction, the voice said, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.*" It is true, the ordinance can be administered when but one of the parents is a believer; but, in such cases, the parental relation is regarded as sanctified in consequence of the believer's faith. "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." Is it not, then, perfectly evident, that faith was equally essential to circumcision as it is now to baptism; and in both cases, is it not an indispensable condition, in the same sense and in all respects?

Both denote the same spiritual change.

That the depraved heart of man must be renewed by the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit, is a most important doctrine of the Christian religion. The claims of God are upon every individual, through the whole course of moral action, and these claims are in every instance resisted where the selfish heart is not changed by the sanctification

of the Spirit. When God demands of every believing parent, that he shall yield up his child to these supreme and righteous claims, and shall consecrate him forever to his service, he has rendered the very form of consecration an impressive memento of the necessity of regeneration, and held up to the anxious hope of the parent a cheerful and animating promise : “ *I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring.*” Accordingly, both in the ancient and the modern form, the purification of the heart by divine grace is the great doctrine most prominently illustrated, whether the individual consecrated be an adult or infant. “ *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.*” From this passage it is evident that the spiritual import of circumcision is not realized unless the inner man is renewed. And the Lord thy God will circumcise *thine heart*, and the heart of *thy seed*, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. Circumcision, therefore, was truly “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” It signified that surrender of the heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that spiritual dedication to his service, which is the fruit of the Spirit, in every instance of its occurrence, either in the present or in former dispensations. That the ordinance of baptism denotes precisely the same thing, is abundantly manifest from the sacred Scriptures : “ *The like figure whereunto, baptism doth also now save us ; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God*”—the response of a regenerated heart to the calls of Jehovah. “ *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new*

heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel xxxvi.

26. The import of the word, and the ordinance, baptism, is *purification*: the external application of the purifying element is emblematic of the inward operations of the purifying Spirit. Hence said Ananias to Saul, "And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." It is certain, therefore, that both circumcision and baptism denote an inward and spiritual change, and indicate the same great regenerating process. The resemblance is perfect, in extending the comparison, either to adults or children. The adult believer received circumcision as a token of his inward and spiritual grace; and dedicated, by the same form, his children, as a sign of their necessity, and of God's promise in reference to the Spirit's work within. The adult believer receives baptism as a token of the same inward cleansing, in his own case, and dedicates his child in the same form, indicating the same necessity, and the same glorious promise, which was anciently represented by circumcision. If, then, the covenant remains, promising spiritual blessings to parents on behalf of their children; if circumcision, the ancient seal, is abolished; and if baptism, introduced at the very time of its abolition, certainly signifies the *very same thing that circumcision did*, then is it not conclusively established, that baptism is now in the place of circumcision the seal of that everlasting covenant? and that the form of consecration, for both parent and child, appropriate to the circumstances, and authorized by Christ, is baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?

Again: *Baptism is to the Lord's supper what circumcision was to the passover.* Those that were admitted to the passover, an ordinance originating in a temporal and na-

tional deliverance, but so appointed as to be representative of the Lamb of God, and analogous to the design of the Lord's supper, were the consecrated households of Israel. Circumcision preceded the reception of the passover ; for, although the rite itself was applied to the males, yet the whole household was considered as a consecrated household. The distinction was as strongly marked between "the daughters of Israel" and "the daughters of the uncircumcised," as between the sons of Abraham and the uncovenanted Gentile. The children, however, were not admitted to partake of the passover, until they were of sufficient age to understand its meaning, and approach in faith. Apply, now, these principles to the relation which baptism sustains to the Lord's supper. Baptism, in its nature adapted to all classes, is evidently considered, in the Scripture, as preceding the communion. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is an ordinance for professed believers only, in which they unite to commemorate their spiritual deliverance. If it is asked why we do not universally admit our children to the communion, the answer is, that we do admit them just as soon as they give us evidence of faith in Christ. Such a profession was implied in the ancient passover, when it was celebrated acceptably. Yet that ordinance had a temporal and national import, as well as a spiritual and typical signification. The Christian passover has no such temporal and national associations ; it is an ordinance in its design and recollections altogether spiritual. The baptized child of the Church is therefore told, that as soon as he will yield to the righteous claims of God, and to the influences of the Spirit, and to the mediation of Christ, the very *change* indicated as indispensable in his baptism itself, he shall be welcomed to the communion. He is invited, by all the proffered advantages of a spiritual and immediate union with the Church, to acknowledge the justice of Jeho-

vah's claims, and to consecrate himself, in heart and life, to the God of the everlasting covenant. If he hardens himself against these merciful invitations, he is admonished, that not by the will of the Church, but by his own inexcusable dissent from the terms of the covenant, he debars himself from its glorious privileges. When we consider, therefore, the propriety of this strictness on the part of the Church, as viewed in connection with the entirely spiritual nature of the Lord's supper; and then compare the relation of circumcision to the passover, and of baptism to the Lord's supper, we see precisely such a resemblance as the great principles of the covenant, as here indicated, must logically authorize.

Each is alike a distinguishing mark of the visible Church. For ages, circumcision thus designated the people of God, and was employed as a token of covenant relationship. When a parent neglected to circumcise his child, that child was excluded from those privileges which the covenant secured to the children of his people. He could not come to the passover, nor be admitted to the fellowship of the ancient Church. When a heathen family would seek a union with the congregation of the Lord, the same seal of the covenant was applied to them. Since circumcision was abolished, baptism has certainly been substituted in its place in this respect. The child of a Christian parent who is not baptized, cannot be admitted to the table of the Lord. The heathen family that would cast away the idols of their former worship, and join the Christian Church, must be baptized. When persons have been excluded from the Church, whether they were baptized in adult age, or in infancy, they are not to have the rite repeated on their readmission, after giving evidence of repentance.

The points of resemblance already mentioned, are of such a nature, that if admitted as facts, they sustain incon-

testably the position—that baptism has been substituted in the place of circumcision, as a seal of the Abrahamic covenant. For a still stronger confirmation of this argument, contemplate *the points of difference*. Circumcision was adapted to prefigure a Saviour to come; baptism, to profess the Saviour already incarnate. Circumcision was adapted to serve, for a few ages, a national and temporal purpose; baptism comes in after that temporal purpose is accomplished, and the national partition wall is demolished. Baptism is even a more expressive ordinance, so far as spiritual purification is concerned; expressive, indeed, of the same great truths which circumcision indicated, but expressive of them in a manner more appropriate to their clearer developments. Circumcision was applied only to one sex, while in the ordinance of baptism there is not only “neither Jew nor Gentile,” but “neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.” While, therefore, the points of resemblance compel us to regard the ordinance of baptism as the authorized seal of the covenant, in the place of circumcision, inasmuch as it does actually answer all the original spiritual purposes of such a seal, and is divinely established in the Christian dispensation, the points of difference do as truly suggest several substantial reasons why a change of the seal was desirable. Let me now ask the reflecting reader to re-examine the several positions of this number, and let the individual strength of each argument, and the combined testimony of the whole, be admitted in the final settlement of this important question.

Finally, let there be added to the foregoing considerations the fact, that *baptism is denominated in Scripture the Christian circumcision*. “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.”—“Buried with him by baptism.” Col. ii. 11-14. “Beware

of the concision ; for *we are the circumcision*, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Thus, when the Jews urged the necessity of circumcision, the believing Gentile might reply, If circumcision indicated a new heart, a spiritual religion, that I possess ; if circumcision expressed that change anciently, my reception of Christian baptism has expressed it with equal, if not superior emphasis. According to the course of argument through which we have passed, circumcision is certainly abolished ; baptism is the acknowledged seal of the gracious covenant for adult believers ; the seal of the covenant is the same for the child as for the parent ; therefore, as the covenant itself remains with all its privileges undiminished, it is the duty of the believing parent to consecrate his children to God in the ordinance of baptism. Since, moreover, the fact that baptism is now in the place of circumcision, the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, is sustained both by every point of resemblance and diversity ; it being manifest that it does take the place of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith ; as having faith for its indispensable condition in the same way that circumcision had ; as a sign or token of the same spiritual change ; as a distinguishing mark of the visible Church ; the very points in which circumcision itself was a seal of the covenant ; and finally, since it is called the circumcision of Christ, and answers in the new dispensation, not only all the original purposes of circumcision under the old, but all the more extensive applications of the covenant under the new dispensation, the decision appears inevitable, *that baptism is now, in the place of circumcision, the authorized and appropriate seal of the Abrahamic covenant.*

The covenant then remains : the promise of spiritual blessings in behalf of children is sure to every believer : the seal is to be applied to both parent and child ; and that seal

is the ordinance of Christian baptism. Dear brethren in Christ ; how precious, how infinitely glorious is this covenant ; how delightful the duty, how invaluable the privilege. When you consider your influence and responsibility as parents ; the great and solemn object of the family relations ; the dreadful depravity of your unrenewed offspring ; the gracious design of God to sanctify your pious influence to their eternal good ; the glorious arrangement of patriarchal ages in which he requires the trembling parent to consecrate his household to him, and gives his promise, his own sure word, that he will be a God to him and to his seed, affixing to this covenant a delightful, expressive, and memorable seal ; O, how thrilling is the thought ! This covenant ! these promises ! this indulgent God ! *all are mine !* With what unutterable tenderness may you kneel at the family altar and say, *Here am I and the children which thou hast given me ! Christian !* this covenant is worth more to you than worlds !

CHAPTER VI.

Argument from Ecclesiastical History. Its use. Household consecration, in some form, the uninterrupted practice of the Church during four thousand years. Not neglected by any considerable portion until within three hundred. Consecration by baptism not denied by any sect during the first thousand years of Christianity: not *commenced* at any period since the apostolic age—universally practised in the fourth century. Its previous history establishing its apostolic origin.

THE manner in which we have contemplated the ordinance of infant consecration, renders it, both in its spirit and form, independent of the testimony of the ecclesiastical fathers. The Bible alone is the infallible guide of Protestants. There on the firm basis of scriptural proof let it rest, a building on a rock. Were it manifest from ecclesiastical history, that the whole Church, through successive ages, had neglected her duty and her privilege, our astonishment might have been awakened, while our confidence in the perpetual covenant remained unshaken. Planting ourselves beside its pure fountains, we could call upon the recreant Church to repent of her sin, and partake of the waters she had so long undervalued.

The argument from the history of the Church, however, while it is not necessary for the establishment of our principles, has several important uses. It is in itself an argument distinct and overwhelming; it illustrates and impresses the conclusions to which we have already arrived, and it will prepare us to understand a portion of scriptural evidence which we have not yet examined.

As the testimony of the fathers has been often collected and urged by able, candid, and pious men, the object of this

chapter will be, simply to present a few grand points which are conclusively established, and which constitute the strength of the argument.

The consecration of infants *by baptism* being now the general practice of christendom, must have originated either under apostolic authority, or at some period subsequent. The consecration of infants, itself, can be attributed to no later period than the days of Abraham. The adoption of baptism as the form, if an unauthorized ordinance of man, must have excited attention, provoked opposition, and left after its prevalence palpable traces of its origin. If, on the other hand, it be of God, we shall find the evidence of history, at every ascending height, still pointing upward to the luminous age of New Testament inspiration.

1. The first point which arrests attention in a general survey of historical evidence, is—*That it cannot be proved that the practice of infant consecration has ever ceased in the Church of God, since it was established in the Abrahamic covenant.*

This is the impression which strikes the mind very forcibly, as it ponders on the path of the Church through all the portions of her eventful history. From the time that the Chaldean shepherd dedicated his household to the present hour, no one period, however brief, can be designated when we can say, *then* there was no infant consecration. Empires have fallen, and risen and fallen; systems of national law, code after code, which in the science of jurisprudence appeared as monuments of intellectual strength and political wisdom, have been rolled together as a scroll; while the deep, unostentatious household law has continued like a cord extended through successive ages, and strung with the jewels of God. Even the changing features of the Church itself have preserved this feature unaltered. The bondage of Egypt; the law of Sinai; the ritual observan-

ces ; the splendor of the temple worship ; the mournful captivity ; the Roman yoke ; the advent of Christ ; the wonders of the new age ; the dispersion of the Jews ; the introduction of the Gentiles into their forfeited privileges ; the pagan persecution ; the papal corruption ; the glorious Reformation : all have had their influence on the aspect of the Church ; but in this respect the great body of the Church has remained steadfast, that she has consecrated her offspring to the Most High. A cessation of this practice for one season cannot be proved from the whole record of history. There, through all changes, the altar of consecration has stood, and successive generations have bowed with their gift of souls before it. How sublime is this fact when viewed in its moral import and bearings ! What an illustration of scriptural promises, " I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee." " And if ye be Christ's, then are ye *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise. " Four thousand years proclaim with united voice, that his mercy endureth forever.

2. The next impression which this survey is calculated to make, is—*That the practice of infant consecration has not been neglected even by any considerable portion of the Church until within about three hundred years.*

We present this fact here because we wish it to be compared with the first. We think that this fact ought to be felt in forming our estimate of the importance of this ordinance. By the above statement we express the general impression of ecclesiastical history. Through all its records we have no history of such neglect until the year 1522. That a higher antiquity is claimed by those who deny the privilege of believing parents, in this respect, is true. They endeavor to prove that the testimony against infant baptism was part of that testimony which, in the low valleys and in the mountain fastnesses, was borne by the

persecuted and the faithful against the man of sin. The utmost, however, which can be admitted in behalf of this claim is, that "in the year 1120 one sect of the Waldenses declared against the baptism of infants, because they believed them incapable of salvation." Their unbelief, however, did not affect the main body of that people, and they who cherished it soon dwindled away. Their number and importance were not sufficient to render any exception necessary to the statement we now contemplate. In the year 1522, there rose a body of men, who insisted upon the invalidity of infant baptism, and demanded a rebaptism of those consecrated in childhood. It was not strange that when the spirit of the Reformation was shaking the foundations of superstition, many who were ignorant should not discriminate between the tares and the wheat, between the precious and the vile. The wild and extravagant notions which they embraced, have prevented even the respect of Protestants for the fathers of the Reformation from ascribing any weight to their opinions. The history of that portion of the Church which denies baptism to infants since that period, in its rise to respectability and influence, does not belong to the survey necessary to sustain the position before us.

3. Another conclusion forced upon us by a candid consideration of the historic argument is—*That for the first thousand years of Christianity, no sect or body of men can be found, denying the validity of infant baptism.*

Notwithstanding all manner of heresies rose and burst like so many bubbles, this great and powerful arrangement of ancient ages was not annulled. The world has been challenged to produce the proof of such a class of Christians. We may, it is thought, extend it to eleven hundred years, and deny that in all that period any Christians, admitting baptism at all, have denied its validity because ap-

plied to infants.—For fifteen hundred years, almost for eleven hundred altogether, the practice of the whole Church was based upon the covenant principles which we have urged upon the attention of Christian parents. During all these centuries, baptism has been used in the place of circumcision, as the seal of that everlasting covenant, in the practice of the universal Church. At least we may rest assured, that there is no proof of any portion whatever holding to baptism at all, which gave to this species of unbelief any foothold during the first thousand years of the Christian era. Is it possible that the whole Church have mistook in the application of a seal to that covenant, which God has so intimately connected with all her vital interests? Again, an examination of ecclesiastical history, convinces us,

4. *That it cannot be proved that the adoption of baptism, as the seal of the covenant, has commenced at any period subsequent to the days of the apostles.*

The bearing of this argument is simply this: if infant baptism is of human invention, there must be a period when it originated, subsequent to the first century. Its introduction into the Church must have been a marked occurrence, must have awakened controversy. It is highly probable, therefore, that the researches of historians would have detected that period, and rationally accounted for its appearance. Nothing like this, however, has been accomplished. If it has a birthplace among human speculations, it has been, like the grave of Moses, screened from the scrutiny of men. If it is from heaven, all these facts are perfectly consistent. The history corresponds with the divine authority of the ordinance, and is most rationally explained by the admission of its claims to be an ordinance of infinite wisdom. The consecration of children by baptism, then, cannot be proved, by any historical evidence now in posses-

sion of the world, to be of human origin. It is certain, that ecclesiastical history has no testimony against it.

Combine, now, these four positions—infant consecration has existed for four thousand years without cessation—it has never been opposed by any considerable portion of the Church until within three hundred years; its validity was not denied by *any* portion of the Church for the first one thousand years—it cannot be proved to have originated at any period subsequent to the apostles. Now, had we found that the opposition to it had always been strong, like that to the doctrine of the Trinity; and the controversy always sharp, like that between the advocates of Augustinian theology and their opponents; had we found even that it had always been depressed and obscure, with a testimony scarcely audible amid the voice of ages; had its existence been suspended for centuries, and even its introduction questionable until the sixteenth century, all this frowning aspect of history could not banish from our sight that testimony of revelation which seems incorporated in the whole connection of Bible truth.

What, then, should be the conclusion, when the whole current of history coincides with the written word; when we trace, in the aspect of ages, the light of principles reflected in glory from preceding ages; reflected through them all upon us? What but to exclaim with stronger confidence as we ponder the Abrahamic promise, Hath he said, and shall he not do it? hath he *spoken*, and shall he not make it good? The study of the argument from history does not terminate here: it proves,

5. *That, in the fourth century, the consecration of infants by baptism was universally practised, on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant; was regarded as substituted for circumcision, and as sanctioned by apostolic authority.*

In proof of this position, we shall rely on the testimony of four substantial witnesses, all belonging to the fourth century. The fourth century, it should be remembered, presents a period of time less than three hundred years after the apostles, and the witnesses were the most conspicuous of its fathers. Augustine, who flourished in the latter part of that century, is very explicit—"Which the whole body of the Church holds in the case of little infants, who are baptized, who certainly cannot believe with their heart unto salvation, and yet no Christian will say that they are baptized in vain."

"The custom of our mother, the Church, in baptizing infants, must not be disregarded, nor accounted useless, and it must by all means be believed to be an order of the apostles."

"It is most justly believed to be no other than a thing delivered by apostolic authority, that is, it came not by a general council, nor by any authority later or less than that of the apostles."

"By the authority of the whole Church, which was undoubtedly delivered by our Lord and his apostles."

These several passages, taken from the writings of Augustine, prove that it was universal in the Church, and was regarded as an apostolic ordinance. That it was an institution whose importance was generally realized, and was so strongly regarded as divine, that in controversial writings on other subjects it was used as a test by which others were to be tried. The question then stood, Is this new doctrine consistent with the baptism of infants? and a full conviction of its inconsistency was sufficient for its refutation. This remark prepares the way for introducing the testimony of Pelagius, the contemporary and opponent of Augustine. He denied the doctrine of original sin, and was pressed hard with the argument from infant baptism.

He repels the charge of denying that institution, in very earnest language :—" Men calumniate me by charging me with a denial of infant baptism. I have never heard of any impious heretic or sectary who denied infant baptism." He labors to prove that his sentiments on the subject of original sin did not involve the denial of infant dedication, and that many reasons existed for the practice, aside from that assigned by Augustine. This appeal of both parties to a common institution shows how firmly it was then established, throughout the Church of God. Tempted, as Pelagius was, to deny its authority, he was able to oppose it, if it could have been opposed. He had travelled extensively in Britain, Gaul, Italy, Africa, Egypt, and Palestine. Yet, with his learning and travel, he makes the affirmation above. He could say, "*I never heard of any impious heretic or sectary who denied infant baptism.*" Thus we have two learned men, warm opponents, both uniting in the strongest kind of testimony on this subject. The testimony is given incidentally, not to prove or disprove infant baptism, but to bear on another topic. The third witness is Chrysostom. He was a contemporary with Augustine and Pelagius.— "But our circumcision, that is, the grace of baptism, gives us cure, without pain, and it has no determinate time as circumcision has." If we admit the testimony of the first two witnesses, we must believe that infant baptism was now universally practised, as an apostolic institution ; and if we will admit in explanation the evidence of Chrysostom, we shall perceive that it was considered as coming in the place of circumcision, and as possessing some advantages over the ancient form, as a seal of the everlasting and extended covenant. The last witness, under the present position, is Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, born in the year 340. He also calls baptism circumcision. Having mentioned the miracle of dividing Jordan, he says, " But perhaps this may

seem to be fulfilled in our time and in the apostles' time." "For that return of the waters backward towards the head of the river, which was caused by Elias, when the river was divided, signified the mystery of the lava of salvation which was afterward to be instituted, by which those who are baptized in infancy are reformed from a wicked state to the primitive state of their nature." Now it is of no consequence to the argument what opinion we form of his exegetical capacity, or what objection we raise to his views of the efficacy of the ordinance. The present argument simply requires the evidence of the existence of infant baptism as an established institution of the Church, on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant, and claiming apostolic authority. The united testimony of these four witnesses conclusively establishes the fact. When we consider the nature of the Pelagian controversy, and the standing of the several witnesses, their evidence seems unimpeachable. The position which we have taken, then, is firmly supported, that in the fourth century, *this institution, with all its claims, was universally honored by the Church of God.* There is another consideration connected with this testimony, that in the fourth century, i. e. within three hundred years after the apostles, it was impossible to trace its origin. Then the most learned men in the Church had never heard of its being rejected. Pelagius inquires, "Who can be so impious as to hinder the baptism of infants?" It is useless to say that these ancient writings were corrupted in these passages, for there was *no temptation to interpolation.*—There was no controversy on the subject until centuries afterwards, and the very manner in which it was interwoven in the Pelagian controversy forbids the supposition of faithless records. The same and similar reasons sustain the credit of extracts now to be made to substantiate another position.

6. It can be proved, *that previous to the fourth century, this institution had been established so long as to render the supposition of its existence in the apostolic age essential to every rational theory of its origin.*

The witnesses to this position are Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, Origen, and Tertullian.

Two hundred and fifty years after the birth of Christ, one hundred and fifty after the apostolic age, a council of sixty-six bishops was convened at Carthage. Fidus, a Presbyter, believing that infants ought not to be baptized before eight days old, presented the subject before the council, and obtained this official answer : *“As to the case of infants, whereas you judge that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born, and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, that no one should be baptized or sanctified before the eighth day after he is born, we were all of a different opinion.”*

One hundred and eighty-five years after Christ, eighty-five years after the apostolic age, Origen was born. His testimony is, first, *“That he himself was a baptized child.”* Second, *“That the Church received an order from the apostles to give baptism even to infants.”* Third, *“That infants are baptized for the remission of sins.”*

About one hundred and fifty years after Christ, fifty years after the apostolic age, Tertullian was born. He advised a delay of baptism, because he believed that sins committed after baptism were not forgiven. *“The delay of baptism is more profitable as to little children. For why is it necessary that the sponsors should incur danger? For they may fail of their promises by death, or be disappointed by the child proving to be of a wicked disposition.”*

These three witnesses present the evidence from which the apostolic origin of infant baptism is rationally inferred. The testimony of Cyprian respecting the council at Car-

thage, implies, 1. That the practice of consecrating infants by baptism was an established order of the Church, unquestioned and unanimously honored.

2. That infant baptism was regarded as substituted for infant circumcision ; else, why the anxious question respecting the propriety of baptism previous to the eighth day ?

3. That the baptism of infants was understood to be a *sanctification*—that is, a *consecration* of them to God.

4. That the council considered the gospel dispensation, not only as preserving to the Gentiles all the privileges of the ancient covenant, but as applying them with less limitation, and with wider extent, in milder forms, and more glorious significancy. The same great principles which we proved to be established in the fourth century, we now see established in the third ; the very principles which have been involved in the whole argument of these essays.—This practice, founded on these principles, could not have arisen in a moment, if it is of human invention. Could it have become universally practised without opposition, if indeed it were an innovation ? Thus, one hundred and fifty years after the apostles, we behold this institution founded on its permanent principles. We see that the infant consecration of those times was the same in object and in form that it now is. We rely on the testimony of Cyprian for the proof of its established credit, and for its *definition*.—The testimony of Origen proves, that this institution, thus defined, existed at least sixty-five years previous to the council of Carthage. The parents of Origen were pious ; his father a martyr, who, while imprisoned, was consoled by a letter from his consecrated child, exhorting him to steadfastness, and congratulating him on his privilege.—Even at a more tender age still, the zeal of that baptized child had to be guarded by the vigilance of a believing mother, lest he should rashly expose himself to martyrdom.

If, then, that father and mother consecrated their children in infancy, they did it believing it their *duty* and their *privilege*. There was no temptation to expose their rising household in those days of persecution, any farther than the command of Christ required them. In the days of his parents, then, it was believed and practised as an institution of the apostles. Had there been a time *known* to them, when it was not practised in the Church, they could have pointed out the innovation. Origen would need, in his inquiries, to search no farther than his own family history. Tertullian's testimony proves, that one hundred years after the apostles the baptism of infants, on the faith of others, was the common practice of the Church. This strengthens the testimony of Origen, while the fact of Origen's own baptism by such parents necessarily carries the evidence at least fifty years nearer the apostles. The council of Carthage, in their decision, corroborate this train of evidence. All the five preceding positions corroborate this view of the subject. We are obliged, therefore, to acknowledge its existence and prevalence, within fifty years of the days of inspiration.

Contemplate that period. The aged Polycarp, disciple of John, was alive and vigorous through all its years. So, also, was Justin Martyr. So, also, was Irenæus. Three noble guardians of purity in the second century ! Polycarp was martyred in 169 ; Justin Martyr in 164 ; Irenæus lived until after 202. If the application of baptism, then, to infants, as the seal of the covenant, was not of apostolic institution, it must have been introduced by their disciples and immediate successors, the apostolic fathers. If it was introduced by them, understanding, as they did, the mind of the apostles ; then we have their views of the household consecration. If it was not introduced by them, then there is only the remaining conclusion, *it arose under the authori-*

ty of the apostles. In either case, the testimony of the ages previous to the fourth century compels us to regard it as a divine institution. There are, however, other considerations, sustaining the present position. In the first place, since Tertullian wished to have baptism delayed, why did he not show that such early baptism, on the faith of sponsors, was an innovation? He certainly was able to do it, if such had been the fact. He had only to consult with Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John, or with Polycarp himself, for he was contemporary with both. Yet no such plea is presented against it. Instead of that, his whole language implies that he felt himself contending with the common and established practice; and his extravagant writings, together with his final separation from the Church, show that same unsound judgment which his reasonings themselves discover. Of Pagan descent himself, he was not likely to appreciate the unfeigned faith of a Christian ancestry.

Actuated by false views of the importance of baptism, he was even led to advise all persons to postpone it until the season of youth had passed away. The principle on which he dissuaded the practice of infant baptism was equally valid in pleading against the baptism of young persons on the profession of their own faith. While these circumstances diminish our confidence in his opinions, they leave us the evidence that the prevailing practice of the Church was against him. We have already shown that this practice was firmly rooted at an earlier age than the publication of his works. So that every circumstance conspires to guide us into the scenes of the first century for its birthplace.

In the next place, consider that, according to the testimony before us, we are directly assured *that the Church received an order from the apostles to give baptism to infants.* This was certainly the opinion of Origen. When we con-

sider that he could ascertain the truth of it in the history of his own family ; that he could ascertain it from Irenæus and other contemporaries ; that he had only that century to review, which was overshadowed by the presence of the apostolic fathers ; that he was remarkable for his inquisitiveness and extensive learning, it is manifest that on this subject he was competent to testify with assurance. That testimony, it seems, corresponds with the plain deductions of reason, as stated above. In addition to the evidence already before us, it may be proper to remember the allusions of Irenæus, Clement, and Justin Martyr. If these are admitted, according to the proper rules of interpretation, they strengthen the conviction produced by the evidence just examined. It is sufficient, however, to say that, on the supposition that infant dedication existed then, these allusions are naturally to be understood as referring to its design and its form of administration. Thus Justin Martyr speaks of those who *were made disciples of Christ from their infancy* ; Irenæus, of *infants born again* ; while Clement evidently exhorts fishermen, in engraven images on seal-rings, to choose the image of an apostle baptizing infants. The testimony of Cyprian, Origen, and Tertullian, is sufficient to establish the fact of its prevalence in the third century and in the second. This being established, the supposition of its existence in the first century, becomes essential to every rational theory of its origin.

Thus, in contemplating the evidence of ecclesiastical history, we have collected several substantial positions, each of which is impressive ; and all combined constitute a mass of overwhelming proof. While it cannot be proved that the practice of infant consecration has ever ceased, in the Church of God, since he established it in the Abrahamic covenant ; while it cannot be proved that it has ever been neglected by any considerable portion of the Church, until

within about three hundred years ; while it cannot be proved that any body of men denied baptism to infants during the first thousand years of the Christian dispensation ; while it cannot be shown that the practice of baptizing infants has originated at any specific period since the apostolic age ; while, moreover, it is abundantly proved that, in the fourth century, the consecration of infants was universally practised, on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant, by baptism in the place of circumcision ; while, finally, it is manifest that, previous to the fourth century, the evidence of its prevalence is such as to render the supposition of its existence in the first century essential to any rational theory of its origin ; I see a body of evidence so harmonious, witnesses so trustworthy, principles so consistent, and providential illustrations so accordant with divine appointments and revealed predictions, that I feel confident in saying to every inquirer, *Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock !*

Still, let it not be forgotten, that we regard this sublime arrangement as resting on the unchanging word of God. We rely on the sacred volume as our only infallible guide on this as well as on other subjects. We present these considerations from history, chiefly, as confirmatory of preceding arguments, as illustrative of principles, and, finally, as preparatory to an examination of other scriptural evidence which we have not yet considered.

CHAPTER VII.

Household consecration in the apostolic age. Its prominence under the ministry of John : of Jesus Christ : of the apostles. The Church obligated to regard it in the same manner.

To the portion of scriptural evidence which we are now to examine, the attention of believing parents is earnestly solicited. My object will be, to exhibit the manner in which the great principles of infant consecration influenced the feelings of the early disciples. We are prepared for this subject, if we have fully imbibed those principles themselves, and admit the evidence by which they are incontrovertibly established. The spiritual blessings connected with parental faithfulness, in the ancient household covenant ; the perpetuity of that covenant, and the right of believing Gentiles to its privileges ; the substitution of baptism in the place of circumcision as its new and appropriate seal, have been spread before us in the decisive testimony of Scripture. All these, as we have seen, were understood and advocated by the apostles in their writings. If they thus understood these truths, their own feelings, plans, and conduct must have been powerfully affected by their influence. The universal practice of infant baptism in the first centuries, as evinced by ecclesiastical history, confirms this impression. It therefore seems proper to examine the inspired history of the first century, with the expectation of beholding there the dignity and grandeur of these vital principles of the Church, exhibited in their native *simplicity and power*. There, in the writings and conduct of the inspired, and in the establishment of the new dispensation,

the native, quiet operation of parental faith is most sweetly portrayed. We cannot, of course, expect to find these truths stated as if in the language of controversy, for there the idea of controversy on this subject was unknown—but if we read the inspired record with the proper spirit, we shall perceive these principles invested with more practical importance than ever they have been in the more degenerate—than they had been, even in the more ancient ages. If this be considered unusual ground, still should it be sustained ; it will strengthen that presentiment which doubtless is even now awakened, that this institution is destined to exert a prominent agency in producing and perpetuating the state of millennial glory.

1. *These principles of infant consecration had a powerful influence in preparing the Jewish nation for the Messiah's advent.*

The evidence of this fact is conclusive, and deeply interesting. We pass by the providential preparation which on this axle turned the wheel of its operations for successive ages, and fix our minds upon that special preparatory work which was prosecuted under the ministry of John the Baptist. In the close of Old Testament prophecy, he had been designated as the messenger who was to herald the Saviour's approach. It was particularly stated, he should turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers. The great and prominent instrumentality which he was to employ, was the powerful agency of family influence. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, The kingdom of heaven is at hand ! prepare ye the *way* of the Lord, must have wrought mightily on the heart of the believing parent in behalf of household education. As the glorious Prince of Israel was constantly expected, with what eagerness would the Jew endeavor to *make ready a people prepared for the Lord—to set his house*

in order for the reception of the Son of David. Hence, at that joyous event, the circumcision of John, the venerable Zechariah dwelt with peculiar delight on “the mercy promised to our fathers;” “on his holy covenant,” and “the oath which he sware to our father Abraham.” Such was the prominence given to this covenant and its provisions, in the consecration of John the Baptist, and in the ministry of preparation which he fulfilled. By operating through *this* channel, he effectually prepared great multitudes of the common people to believe on the Saviour’s name at the moment his arrival was announced.

From the predictions—the specific mission of John the Baptist—from the results of his mission, as manifested in the succeeding history of the first century, it is evident that the principles of infant consecration were regarded as all-important to the first advent of the Son of God.

2. *The mission of Christ himself, while on earth, was characterized by a special and continual regard to these principles.*

He devoted his entire course of personal labor to the children of the covenant. He said, even on a most affecting occasion, “*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” He came unto his own—his consecrated ones—he devoted to them his miracles and his instructions; from them he selected his apostles, and to them he made the first offers of salvation; he proclaimed himself *the King of the Jews*—he treated them as the privileged children of the Abrahamic covenant. Consecrated to God himself in infancy, he practically acknowledged the justice of the divine claim thus placed upon him in the commencement of his existence, by a personal and perfect consecration of himself to the will of his Father, until his dying hour. He took a deep interest in the consecrated children of his friends. When some believing parents brought their devoted off-

spring to him, that he should recognize them, *he* took them up in his arms and blessed them. In the very spirit of this ancient covenant, he exclaimed, "*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" During many ages previous, the spiritual kingdom, and the visible kingdom of God, had been maintained chiefly, and perhaps entirely, from the action of consecrated family influence on consecrated households. Of such, out of such, the lively stones had been taken, with which the building of God has thus far been erected.

If, however, the kingdom of heaven is to be understood particularly of the Christian dispensation, then the perpetuity of these covenant privileges in after ages is completely established. He saw in those consecrated children of believing parents the future martyrs of the first century, the future pillars of the Church, the Abrahams of successive generations. His spirit broke out in joy as he cried, "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." How illustrious, to him, did that wisdom of God appear, by which "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he had ordained strength, that he might still the enemy and the avenger." Glorious arrangement ; by which around this plain, enduring, universal principle of household consecration, God had clustered all the prospects of the Church, and all the interests of the whole train of generations ! The testimony of ecclesiastical history, both inspired and uninspired, ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian, proclaims that there was meaning in the Saviour's joy—power in his condescension ; and glory in his blessing. Not in all the history of ancient patriarchs, however, do we find their principles so recognized in a whole course of action, and so made a mat-

ter of exulting joy, as in the life and the language of the Messiah.

3. *The commission which Christ gave his apostles to teach and baptize all nations, embraces, establishes, and especially honors these covenant principles.*

Contemplate the circumstances. The Jewish dispensation was now to cease ; the particular reasons for using circumcision as the seal of the covenant, had all vanished ; circumcision was thenceforth to be displaced ; it had *once pointed to a Saviour yet to come* ; the preparatory dispensation of John had also closed, and with it his baptism, which pointed to a Saviour *just about to come* ; a new dispensation of that same ancient covenant was now to be established, varying from all others in this, that its public rite must now point to a *Saviour already come* : like the great principle of the everlasting covenant itself, that sealing rite was to be applied, not to one nation exclusively, but to all nations ; not to one sex, but to *both* ; not in the name of Jesus alone, but in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; now more clearly revealed as the triune God ; and in that revelation clothing that same covenant of faith with augmented importance, because of the vast extent of its gracious provisions, and because of the transcendant efficacy of its administration. These were the circumstances in which the apostolic commission, establishing the ordinance of Christian baptism, was to be given.

What vast importance must have been connected with that covenant which was thus to receive a new and nobler seal ! How must he have remembered the promise to Abraham : *In thee* all the families of the earth should be blessed ! How must his omniscient mind have enjoyed the satisfactory sight of his numerous seed, for whom he had travailed, as he tore away the partition wall, and *commanded* the

blessing of Abraham to flow upon *the Gentiles* ! He knew that the Abrahamic covenant promised spiritual blessings to parents on behalf of their children ; that although there were important reasons for changing the seal, there were all the ancient, together with additional reasons, for retaining the covenant and confirming its promises ; foreseeing that the Jews would reject the gospel offer, he had determined to bestow all the immunities of that covenant upon the Gentiles ; he was now about to appoint a seal in the place of circumcision, by which faith like that of Abraham would be more emphatically expressed, in the new circumstances of his Church, than it could be by retaining the one which had served, in addition to its spiritual and original purpose, certain temporary and national ones : he knew that whatever the seal might be, the same had always been used in the consecration of children, which was used in the consecration of parents : all this he knew, *for all this he has fully revealed in his own word*. Knowing all this, he yet appointed baptism, in view of fulfilling these promises until the end of the world ; he neither commanded, authorized, or permitted any limitations of the ancient privileges ; and appointing it in this manner, and with this knowledge, he must have intended the application of baptism as the new seal of the ancient, confirmed, and extended covenant, to believers and their households.

He knew, moreover, that the apostles were all consecrated children of the covenant ; that they, as Jews, highly valued their descent from Abraham ; that even they did not fully understand then the design to bestow the gospel—or, in other words, the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic covenant—on the Gentiles ; that, for a while, therefore, thus understanding the gospel, they would confine their ministrations to the Jews ; that ultimately, however, they

would understand that believers of all nations were the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise ; and that under their labors, the Gentiles as well as the Jews would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith ; he therefore must have intended the apostles to understand him as commanding them to apply that rite which they knew to be the seal of the covenant to believers and their households ; and that ultimately they should thus apply it both to the Jews and the Gentiles. If, therefore, he had wished infants, under the new dispensation, to be denied baptism, and parents, under the new dispensation, to be deprived of their ancient privileges, he would have explicitly stated this in the commission itself. No such thing is stated. On the other hand, we know that the apostles did understand him as confirming all these privileges to parents, among all nations, because they have fully taught this in their epistles to the Churches. We know that they must thus have understood him, from all their habitual views of the household relations.

How sublime is this view of the Saviour. Having completed the great atonement—having abolished the whole superstructure of the exclusive dispensation, he took the great fundamental principles of household consecration ; the heavenly blessings of the everlasting covenant ; the promises of grace which had been spread like a canopy over a thousand generations, and wrought them all into the new dispensation. He commanded his ministers to seal them upon the company of believers in all nations and through all ages ; and promised to be with them in the majesty of his mediatorial throne until the end of the world. The unvarying practice of the Church for the first thousand years, the general practice for eighteen hundred, is thus fully explained by the command to baptize, as given to apostles

who cherished these covenant views, by him who on earth sanctioned them by his example, and who in heaven has gloriously honored them by the outpouring of his Spirit.

4. *These principles were especially sanctioned by the manner in which the apostles preached the gospel.*

They preached thus at the day of Pentecost. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The Saviour had made the atonement, ascended on high, established the Christian dispensation, and now the apostles stood forth to preach the gospel in all the fulness of its mercy to a dying world. They held up to the view of all the ancient covenant promise—the promise to parents and their children—the promise of the Spirit. They expected that if the Jews then embraced the gospel, the influences of the Spirit would be poured down like rain upon their households. They feared not to urge them, by all the value and efficacy of this promise, to comply with the conditions which secured their own salvation and that of their children.—When they retired from the crowded assembly, they preached in the same manner to the private family. When the trembling jailer fell down before them, inquiring about his soul, they said, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.*" They expected that if he believed, and consecrated his household to God, God would bless and save his children. In the same manner, Cornelius was informed that the apostle for whom he was directed to send, would tell him "words whereby he and all his house should be saved." They believed the divine promise, and preached it in all its simplicity and freeness. They seemed to rejoice in the fact that the new dispensation

was distinguished by the power of God ; and they used the great principles of consecration, as if here they might be applied in a manner more glorious and efficient. They did not teach that either parents or children could be saved without believing ; but they did teach that God would pour his Spirit on their seed, and his blessing on their offspring. According to the truth of the everlasting covenant, they expected that the faith of the parent would produce prayer and labor for the conversion of the children ; that such prayer and labor would be successful, because that faith made them heirs of the promise, “I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee.” They gloried in the prospect of establishing over the whole world this spiritual and perpetual covenant, of extending its privileges to all the families of the earth, and thus providing the system of influences requisite to perpetuate the universal triumph of the gospel. We have reason to believe that in the first churches, these anticipations of the apostles were gloriously realized, and that if the principles of infant consecration had been trusted, and employed in successive ages, as they were in apostolic times, the gospel would have been, long ere this, the religion of mankind—perpetual in its ascendancy, and heavenly in its operation. But when the Church began to degenerate, although the principle was maintained, and the form was disproportionately esteemed, the living faith and enlarged expectations of the earliest believers were comparatively disregarded.

4. *The influence of these principles, in the first centuries, is strikingly evinced by the fact, that when parents believed, they immediately consecrated their households to God.*

On this subject we are not left to inference only : although from all the facts before us, such an inference would be unavoidable, because otherwise we could not explain the testimony of ecclesiastical history ; and chiefly, because in this

way alone the apostles could act consistently with their own established and avowed principles. We should expect them to be in their practice consistent with their sentiments and their preaching. We should conclude they were, even if no positive record existed in reference to their practice. The narrative, however, is not silent—it does speak—and so far as it testifies, it proves that in every case when the *conversion and baptism of parents are particularly mentioned, the consecration of their households by baptism is mentioned also.* The trembling jailer, as soon as he heard the terms, embraced them and was baptized, he and all his straightway. If, as some suppose, all his household believed, the force of the principle would not thus be abated. This fact would corroborate the statement already made, that the apostles expected the conversion of households to follow the conversion of the parents, because they relied with unwavering faith on the meaning of the Abrahamic promise. This was the only promise which would warrant such an expectation; and this did warrant them to invite parents to believe in Christ, in view of the salvation which they would thus secure to themselves and their household. If, however, there were children too young to be baptized, on the profession of their own faith, that same promise would require them to be consecrated on the faith of their parents. The language of this passage speaks of the jailer's baptism as following his own faith; while it clearly implies that their baptism followed in consequence of their relation to *him*. This leaves us the conclusion, that his household consisted of those who were of nonage, and who in their baptism were consecrated to God on the faith of the jailer. The record of the conversion of Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, is another confirmation of the present position—“*and when she was baptized and her household*”—the baptism of her household seems to be mentioned

as a matter of course, after her own; and yet while her heart is especially mentioned as opened, not a word is said respecting the *faith* of her household. Even had the faith been mentioned, it still would appear as the immediate fulfilment of the covenant promises; while, according to the present mode of narration, the impression is, that she consecrated her household immediately to God by baptism, in full reliance on the provisions of that covenant. The manner in which the baptism of the household of Stephanas is mentioned, conveys the same impression. Since, therefore, whenever the conversion and baptism of heads of families are recorded, the baptism of their families is also recorded, while their conversion is not; since, moreover, it is manifest that the household dedication occurred in consequence of the faith of the parents; since in this fact we see the direct application of those views which the apostles always avowed; since, finally, we believe the apostles consistent in their views and practices, we are at once presented with the general custom of the Churches under their ministration. It seems, that so clearly was the promise presented, and so joyfully was it received, that believing parents hastened to devote their children to the triune God, in the same form in which they had devoted themselves forever.

6. *The manner in which the covenant relation of children was regarded, in apostolic days, is manifest from the manner in which the consecrated households of believers were treated.*

The first thought is, that they must have sought, and generally witnessed, the piety of their offspring in very early life. There is nothing said of the conversion of the children of believers after their arrival at adult age. So far as we can gather, the conversion of the households rapidly followed the conversion of the parents. If it was customary to see the conversion of children delayed until many

years had rolled away, it is probable that, in the writings of the apostles and evangelists, we should find some notice of such conversions ; some admonitions in view of such delay, and some allusions to the great change thus wrought in believing families. Instead of this, we find parents directed to educate their children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* ; we find children commanded to obey their parents in *all things* ; we find the animating promises of the covenant reiterated in the instructions of the Holy Ghost, and accomplished in his operations. Another reflection is, that children of believing parents are nowhere mentioned as subjects of baptism after they have become adults. No account can be found of the baptism of a child of Christian parents, unless it is found in the cases of household baptism, where the baptism was administered in consequence of the faith of the parents. If now we consider, that the children of believers were immediately consecrated to Christ, and that the Spirit of grace early descended upon them, in answer to the prayers of their parents and of the whole Church ; so that they generally had an experimental knowledge of the gospel, and appeared “sober and steady,” serious and consistent in their deportment ; of course, there would be no record either of conversions or baptism in after years. This is precisely the state of the case, as a sober estimate of the New Testament record would give it.

This is the state in which the Church ought to be, not only having all the baptisms of her children in infancy, but all their sanctification, early beginning, then growing with their growth and strengthening with their strength. This is the state in which the Church will be when “*all shall know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest.*” Then all her children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of her children. A still more impressive consideration is, that so important was the relation regarded, that

even where only one of the parents was a believer, the children were accounted holy—" *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.*" The apostle proves the validity of the marriage, although one of the parties remained an unbeliever, perhaps a base idolater, by the fact, *that the children, in consequence of their relation to the believer, were considered and treated as holy.* The holiness here predicated of the children is relative. The words unclean and holy are used in reference to religious observances. That was unclean, in an ancient Jewish usage, which was not fit to be offered to God. That was holy which was consecrated to his service. Hence the Sabbath, the feast days, the temple, its vessels; the priests, their vestments; and the circumcised children, were all denominated holy. This was the customary language of the nation and of the Church for ages. When, therefore, the children of a believer are called *holy*, we understand that they are either actually consecrated to God, or are proper subjects of religious consecration. The very manner in which infant dedication is alluded to in this passage indicates how universally it was practised, and how highly it was esteemed among the apostolic Churches. The children, then, of the Church are to be regarded with peculiar attention in her prayers and instructions. By the providence of God they are cast, in their helplessness, upon her bosom; by the command of God, they are claimed for his own, and onstamped with the seal of his covenant. The Church, therefore, is under solemn obligations to acknowledge the claim, by obeying the command; and the parent who refuses will be responsible to God in that day when God shall judge between *the parent and the child*. If this subject is in itself, and in its scriptural representations, so important, every parent should give it a deep, and prayerful, and faithful consideration.

It is time for the whole Church to awake. A *trust* inestimable in its value is committed to her faith. But her slumber is appalling. When will she feel this theme in all its thrilling influence? When will she prepare herself for the millennial glory? When will she go back, or rather ascend to the standard of apostolic ages? In the commencement of this chapter it was said, that in the first century the principles of household consecration were more highly appreciated than at any other period, before or since. Is not the position substantiated? How were they honored in the preparation for Messiah's advent! In the whole course of his ministry! In the fulness and extent of the apostolic commission! In the freeness and exuberant riches of gospel proposals as apostles preached them! In the immediate consecration of Christian households to the triune God! In the whole manner of treatment which the baptized children of the first century received from parents and apostles, from the Churches and Saviour! On what period of time can we fasten, in the whole range of ecclesiastical memory, so highly distinguished for the spiritual power and grandeur of this institution, as were the purest and earliest years of Christianity?

What spirit-stirring motives evolve from the body of evidence which is now before us? We have seen the foundation of this institution laid in the great principles of God's eternal government, and of the family constitution; we have seen its principles characterizing the divine procedures until the time of Abraham; and its enthronement signalized by the stipulations of the covenant, and the appointment of an external form of consecration; we have seen in its confinement to the Jews, and in its power of preserving the Jewish Church until Shiloh came, one long successful experiment of its energy; we have seen the incontrovertible evidence of that covenant's perpetual nature; of its exten-

sion, with all its spiritual blessings enhanced, over the Gentile world ; we have seen the title of believing Gentiles to its promises incontestably established ; we have listened to its assurances of mercy to believers in behalf of their children ; we have felt that while the ancient seal was abolished, a more appropriate, significant and universal one was wisely established in the form of baptism. We have seen the whole testimony of ecclesiastical history ascribing this change of the seal to the days of the apostles ; we have seen in the *records, the inspired* and infallible records, of those days, evidence that then this institution flourished with universal honor, uncorrupted purity, and transcendant power ! In view of this overwhelming mass of proof, we therefore call upon the Church : “ Be not faithless, but believing.” An institution thus distinguished, thus established, thus interwoven with all the vital interests of religion during four thousand years, is worthy of our entire, increasing, and unceasing confidence.

CHAPTER VIII.

Utility of household consecration. The state of mind essential to its acceptable performance. The distinct and solemn pledge. Its actual bearing on parental duties.

IF God has ordained the practice of infant consecration, it is presumptuous to question its utility. Even if we could not at once prove its utility, from its inherent adaptation, or its practical results, we should be bound to maintain it faithfully, and prize it highly. Genuine faith in God shrinks not from obedience, even when his command is dark and mysterious. Here, however, is no dark and mysterious command. The obedience of faith would leave the parent even to *sacrifice* his son, his *only* son ; his son of promise and of love, if God required it. Here, however, no sacrifice is demanded.

Our belief in the *importance* of this institution does not depend simply on its divine authority. In its very nature and bearing, there is abundant evidence of its salutary influence. In the living facts of its history, and the wondrous sanctions of the Spirit, there is demonstration strong of its honorable connection with the divine economy. Whether we contemplate its impressive agency on the *parent*, on the *child*, on the *Church*, on the *world*, we are constrained to believe that, considering simply its practical tendencies, *the Christian Church has not another ceremony of equal value.*

The reader is requested to bear in mind that I speak of infant dedication *as it has been defined and defended in the preceding chapters.* I shall not undertake to prove the utility of a spurious consecration. I reject alike that which,

having the form, denies the power, and that which, confident of the power, contemns the form. If there be infant consecration to false gods, or to an imaginary god, or even to the true God, with a false heart, it is no part of mine to eulogize its practical operation. The argument of these chapters is not responsible for the infant dedication of a corrupted Christianity in any land, family, circumstances, or generation.

The infant consecration here solemnly urged, is that which the "father of us all" first practised, and which the Saviour himself modified for all nations, and confirmed for all ages. I shall therefore attempt to show in what manner the ordinance of infant consecration produces the parental faithfulness, and in what manner God blesses that faithfulness in remembrance of his holy covenant. Thus it will appear that through this institution a stream of beneficial influence is conveyed, that makes glad the city of our God.

1. *The utility of household consecration is inferred from the state of the mind essential to its most acceptable performance.* The parents are supposed to be true believers, they regard the terms of the covenant as just, its promises as infinitely precious, and its appointed seal as a significant token of his gracious design, and of their confiding love. They regard the special promise of persevering grace to them, as giving them a strong foundation, for prosecuting their holy plans in their household. They regard the conditional promise of grace for their offspring, as affording them a full opportunity for trying the strength of vigorous, household faith. They see that it opens to their access inexhaustible stores of grace. Promise rises upon promise, prize upon prize. One apartment of mercy opens into another. The angel of the covenant throws wide its portals, and beckons them still to advance. The

continuance of God's Church in their household : the salvation of each individual member : the needful temporal welfare : the high attainments of holiness : the distinguished usefulness of their children : the surpassing degrees of celestial glory : and all these not for one generation, but by the extension of the vital principle of consecration, for a thousand. These are the promises of the covenant, in their glorious gradation ; and the pathway of ascent from the lowest to the highest, is open to the aspirings of parental faith !

He regards the sacred seal, as implying an entire consecration of himself and his household to these lofty promises and purposes of the covenant. He is admonished that this relation is gained only through faith, is maintained only through faith. The example of the unbelieving Jew is before him. The danger, the guilt, the consequences of covenant violations, of parental unfaithfulness, are all before him in the history of the Church, and the records of the covenant. Suppose the parent to ponder these things deeply in his heart ; then let him come to the altar of consecration, with that state of mind which all these considerations produce and sanction. I appeal to philosophy, to common sense, to experience, when I say that a powerful parental influence must be secured by that state of mind here supposed. The value of the child ; its depravity ; its exposure ; its need of regeneration ; the great principle of the divine government in its dealings with parents ; the development of that principle in the Abrahamic covenant ; the solemn earnestness and fulness of that promise ; the privileges conferred by the gospel on the Gentiles ; the necessity of self-examination ; of genuine faith ; of an entire surrender of the young immortal ; the conviction of personal parental responsibility combined with a sense of personal insufficiency, and with the strength of parental affection—

all these, pressing on the soul, must render the scene of baptism, to the spiritual parent, intensely impressive and overwhelming. If ever strong resolves of parental faithfulness can be formed, they could be formed then. If ever the soul of man braces herself for high and noble efforts, it is just when all the arguments of fear, with all the animation of hope, blend their strength in one impulse, and urge her on to one specific movement. To deny the practical energy of such consecration, would be to reason against all the laws of mind, and all the principles of sound philosophy.

2. *The utility of this ordinance is evident from the fact, that the act of consecration involves, on the part of the parents, a distinct and solemn pledge to educate the child for Jehovah.*

The reasons why such a pledge might wisely be required were stated in the first two chapters. Several fundamental reasons, not for believing in infant baptism, but for the institution of infant consecration, were then stated. It is reasonable that, if moral influence is in itself so powerful, and in its family relations so energetic; if depravity is entire and universal, and if God designs to bestow the influences of his grace in connection with parental faithfulness, a distinct and solemn pledge should be required of parents to consecrate their whole parental influence to the Lord. Such a pledge is required and given in the ordinance of infant dedication. The parent there acknowledges the absolute right of God to his child; the capacity of his child for moral government; the force and abiding reality of parental obligation; his own dependence on the atoning and regenerating grace of God; and in view of all the invisible relations connected with the spiritual nature and destiny of his offspring, he gives *the pledge* that he will faithfully instruct, guide, restrain, and educate, intellectually and morally, that immortal spirit for heaven. It is given at the

family altar ; it is given in the house of God ; it is inscribed on every parental and every Christian memorial ; it is given in presence of his household—of the Church, of the world, of ministering angels, and a covenant-keeping God. It is given in a state of mind most calculated, of all others, to insure it a power, a meaning, and a spiritual energy. It is useless to say, that the parent will discharge his duties as well without giving a pledge as with. We do not reason thus on any other subject. The merchant does not reason thus in his business. God has not reasoned thus in the marriage institution, nor in requiring his followers to pledge themselves by a public profession to be faithful. Our fathers did not reason thus in signing the Declaration of Independence. Nations have not reasoned thus in crowning their monarchs. Among all nations, and in all institutions, human and divine, when great interests are at stake, the pledge, the sacred, inviolable pledge, has been required, both by the dictates of human nature, of reason, and religion. It is folly thus to argue against all the current of human experience, and against all the principles of human practice.

To disprove the utility of a pledge in these circumstances, it is essential to prove that the interest at stake is of small moment ; that the common practice of all mankind is useless ; or that a pledge, in these circumstances, will not have the same tendency as in others. The opposite of each of these is self-evident, and the demonstration is morally invulnerable, that if a pledge is *important* any where, it is here. If it is *rational* any where, it is here. If it is *powerful* any where, it must be peculiarly powerful here. The souls of a household ! entrusted to the moral culture of two frail, trembling, and imperfect beings ! Where is the parental heart ? where the heart of faith, or mercy, or compassion, which would not wish to

have secured to those souls, as strongly as possible, those means and influences on which their eternal welfare depends? Who can fail to see how well the ordinance of infant consecration is adapted to give this security?

3. *The utility of infant baptism is manifest from its actual bearing on the performance of parental duties.*

The parents retire from the sanctuary to the household hearth. *There they bow at the family altar.* They plead for the soul which they have given to God. They reiterate their vows, and commend their child to the Spirit of the covenant. Can they do less, if they act according to their strongest feelings and solemn promises? Where has family worship been most faithfully maintained? Unquestionably, where the household dedication advocated in these chapters has been most faithfully performed. I appeal to Scotland, to England, to the United States, as compared with other countries. I appeal to the history of those Churches which have most clearly understood these principles and most highly proved them. The maintenance of family worship is regarded as a sacred, indispensable duty, generally if not universally, in those Churches where family consecration is rightly practised. As a convincing illustration of this, we need but present, as a specimen of a whole class, the household worship of New-England. It is unnecessary to extend the comparison minutely, through different denominations, yet let the inquiry be prosecuted ever so extensively, the same principle would gather continual confirmation. It is painful to present the other side of the picture. An aged godly minister once said, when addressing a Church, who, like himself, rejected infant dedication, "*I am acquainted with the state of our Churches in all this region, and there are but few members who maintain family worship.*" This assertion could never be made respecting families who practise infant consecration on the principles here professed.

What glowing interest must these principles awaken in the bosom of the family circle !

“The saint, the father, and the husband prays.” They not only preserve family worship, but they purify, inspire, and ennoble it.

If the parents are prompted to maintain family worship, in consequence of their covenant faith and engagements, they will, in the same manner, be influenced *to diligence in family instruction*. They will draw around them the consecrated group. The father, when he sitteth down, and when he riseth up, when he goeth out, and when he cometh in, in the house, and by the way. The mother in the closet and in the nursery, each in their respective stations ; both at their united domestic fireside. They *will* instruct them. Such is the inference forced upon us, *for according* as family worship is neglected or honored, so *will it generally* be with religious instruction. The facts correspond with the inference. The catechetical instruction ; the strict household regulations ; the stern doctrinal and moral principles, instilled even with proverbial diligence by our ancestors ; the Sabbath school instruction ; the maternal association, the simplified religious reading in modern times, all bear witness to the truth of these statements, and have chiefly originated among those who baptize their children, and have been mainly propelled by the zeal which the coals from this altar have enkindled. It is true that much is now done where the ordinance of infant dedication is not practised ; that an increasing interest is now felt, there is no doubt ; other truths and principles have operated, in a measure, to stimulate ; and more especially the presence and example of infant consecration in the same neighborhoods has counteracted the tendency of neglect in many families. Yet the inspiring, moving spring of this

unusual interest is manifestly the spirit of household dedication.

For the same reasons, that family worship and instruction are nourished by this influence, *will intellectual education be promoted*. The parents feel that the minds for whose moral culture God has adapted such a special system of provision, ought to receive the best possible intellectual cultivation. Hence the principles of infant consecration have always tended to promote the general education of youth. Again I mention Scotland, England, the United States, and especially New-England. To mention these countries, especially the last, is sufficient. Their common schools; their educated ministry; their literary and scientific institutions; their numerous publications, in volumes and periodicals, and their general intelligence, are known and honored of all men.

The parents who are influenced as described above *will train up their households to sanctify the Sabbath*.

The mind imbued with the reasonings which establish the divine authority of infant baptism, will feel the beauty and force of that which sustains the divine authority of the Christian Sabbath. On the other hand, those who have taught the abolition of the Abrahamic covenant, have extensively advocated the abrogation of the fourth commandment. *The heart* which prizes most highly the covenant of consecration, will naturally feel most deeply the value of the Lord's sacred day. The same manner of investigation, adopted under the other specifications, will equally illustrate the correspondence of the history with the logical deductions.

If these things are so; if family worship and instruction, if the benign influences of liberal education, and the auspicious energies of the Christian Sabbath, are promoted,

preserved, and elevated, through the influence of household consecration, can any man question its manifest and its surpassing utility? If, moreover, its living truths, its solemn pledge, and its actual bearing on the performance of parental duties, are so conspicuous, how salutary must be its influence *on the formation of parental character*. The constant exercise of such Abrahamic faith, of such patriarchal solicitude, of such strong, deep, and prevailing prayer, as the fulfilment of the pledge, the development of these principles, and the performance of these duties demand, must tend to form a lovely, steadfast, and consistent character. How sweetly must it combine warmth of affection with vigor of intellect, and domestic cheerfulness with holiness of conversation. *It is* "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

CHAPTER IX.

Utility of household consecration continued. Its influence on consecrated children. Examples—its connection with prevailing prayer. Examples—the early conversion of children.

HAVING considered in what manner the ordinance of infant consecration produces parental faithfulness, we shall proceed to inquire *in what manner God blesses that faithfulness, in remembrance of his holy covenant. Hence we remark,*

4. *That the utility of this ordinance is manifest, from the restraining moral influence which it exerts upon the minds of consecrated children while impenitent.*

A pious lady, being solicited by her daughters for permission to attend a ball, replied, My dear children, in your infancy I consecrated you to the Saviour; how then can I give my consent to your request?—I have dedicated you to him forever—do you wish to break away from that dedication? Will you not rather yourselves now consent to that precious covenant? They paused, considered, assented to her decision, and rejoiced that they had a mother who was steadfast to her baptismal engagements.

A young lad, over whose infancy a dying mother breathed her prayer of faith, and over whose earliest years the watchfulness of that mother's parents and sisters exercised the care of holy affection, was once strongly tempted, when at play with his schoolmates, to take the name of his covenant God in vain. So powerful was the temptation, that he even resolved to venture his first oath. The word was forming on his lips, when the thought of his infant de-

dication rushed to mind ! How can I profane that sacred name which has been sealed upon me by the command of divine mercy, and the faith of parental love ? That oath was never uttered—and that child, in all future temptation, was preserved from the sin of profaneness.

An intelligent gentleman, not himself a professor, says that he should infer from his own experience, that this ordinance is more valuable for its practical tendencies, than any other in the Christian Church. The thought of his own infant baptism had powerfully restrained him amidst the temptations of life, and preserved his character from vice and immorality. To these examples multitudes might be added, showing in what manner the finger of God, through this institution, often touches the impenitent heart.—The public morals of those communities where this ordinance is practised in its spiritual import, afford an appropriate illustration of its restraining influence.

5. *The utility is evinced from the manner in which God answers the prayers of his people while directly pleading the covenant promises.*

It was the privilege of the writer to attend a protracted meeting in one of our loveliest villages, which was characterized with thrilling exhibitions of the power of the covenant. A brother in the ministry, whose mind had been long awake to the importance of this subject, being grieved at the lifeless aspect of a very large Church, had almost resolved to abandon the scene of labor. He inquired of the pastor if there were many baptized youth in his congregation who were unconverted. Yes, said he, there are very many. Then I will stay. This subject of infant dedication was immediately presented before the congregation. The baptismal vows of believing parents, and the consequent guilt of their stupidity in such a season, were urged with holy fervor. The fountain was unsealed—the waters of repentance flowed—parents pressed forward with their

children, to renew their vows, and supplicate forgiveness for themselves, and salvation for their offspring—baptized children whose parents were not present were invited, and came trembling forward to solicit the prayers of the Church—parents baptized in infancy, but unconverted, and by their unbelief cutting off themselves and their children from the covenant blessing, came with weeping also—and, while united hearts plead the glorious promises of the Abrahamic covenant, the Spirit of the Lord came down like rain upon the mown grass, and from that moment the work progressed until many souls were added to the Lord. Similar exhibitions have often been witnessed in scenes of revival. And were inquiry to be strictly made into the more secret springs of influence, it would often be found that the windows of heaven were opened by some strong grasp of the covenant.

In the ordinary circumstances of the Church, and in the spiritual history of individuals, the connection of household promise with prevailing prayer, is abundantly exhibited. A lawyer, while visiting the place where the work of God was progressing, was awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, and sought the prayers of Christians. The little prayer meeting was nearly closing, and he still refused to surrender. "He is a baptized child," it was said. The prayer was renewed—the covenant promise urged at the throne of grace, and he rose up rejoicing in the Lord. A believing wife states, that she distinctly remembers the hour when her husband (now occupying a sphere of distinguished usefulness in the Church) was delivered from the bondage of sin while prayer was made unto God for him, on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant. Instances of a similar character might be recounted till they should fill the pages of a volume. And in this age of revivals, it is the solemn duty of the Church to make known these wonders of grace.

6. *The utility of infant consecration is most appropriately exhibited by its bearing on the early conversion of children.*

It presents this subject in its true aspect before the Church. It proclaims their need of regeneration ; it points to the atonement as their only hope, and to the Spirit of God as the almighty agent. It encourages them to plead for its speedy renovation. Should the parent who believes in the ability and willingness of God to regenerate the infant, when he is about to translate him to another world, exercise the same faith in God in reference to the continuance of his life on earth ; should he seek, not merely that the infant may be saved, but that he may glorify God *in his whole earthly existence*, and therefore plead for his early conversion with that intense earnestness which sometimes wrestles with God at the dying bed of some hardened and abandoned child of the covenant, this would be acting according to the spirit of the ordinance. In whatever degree parental faithfulness has thus taken hold of the covenant, the blessing of God has been accordingly granted. The mother of Samuel acted thus when she consecrated him to God, and multitudes of parents in ages since have rejoiced in the same covenant promise fulfilled in early childhood. In proof of this, the names of many distinguished divines and holy men, in all ages, might be adduced. This subject is now happily growing in importance, and there have recently been many examples of the conversion of households, especially in connection with prayer, which has plead the Abrahamic promise. A clergyman states, that after a season of special prayer with God for his consecrated little ones, he obtained delightful evidence that they had given their hearts to God. The great subject which filled his thoughts, and his wrestling prayers, was the glory of God as connected with the household covenant. There

should be, indeed, great faithfulness in deciding on the evidence presented, but the parental mind, rightly affected by these views, will rather expect daily to behold such evidence than be surprised at its occurrence. It should be remembered, that the grand object is not simply their conversion, it is that they may be holy in all their life ; that they may honor the gospel by their whole course of action ; that they may be trained for the service of Christ as faithful soldiers that God may be glorified, in the highest possible degree, through the family constitution. To this their conversion is subordinate and essential. Until the parent can be satisfied of the conversion, he cannot be assured of the higher and grander object.—Therefore, he should give him no rest until the reign of grace is manifestly established throughout the household. The increase of this spirit is one of the brightest harbingers of millennial glory. It is indescribably important as connected with the efforts now made to instruct the rising generation. While we are pouring light upon their tender age, with what intense fervor should we beseech the genial influences of grace. It is true that most affecting instances might be mentioned of the power of infant consecration, to affect the mind of hardened and abandoned sinners, when all other means have failed ; and the grace of God in these marvellous outgoings of its healing virtue, deserves our loudest praise ; yet the primary and regular operation of this gracious economy is in its own legitimate and direct bearing on the early regeneration of children. O, when will Zion understand the depth, the sweetness, the purity of her own ancient and everlasting fountains.

On the whole, there are several considerations connected with this subject which may well astonish us. It is astonishing that the Church has not appreciated these wonderful privileges more justly. It is astonishing that notwithstand-

ing her *criminal* unfaithfulness, the covenant promises have been fulfilled so manifestly. It is, finally, astonishing, that any should be disposed, after such *demonstrations* as the history of Zion affords, to question the utility of infant consecration.

CHAPTER X.

Utility of household consecration continued. Relation of baptized children to the Church. Influence on the prosperity of the Church. The theory.

THE utility of infant consecration will farther appear to every reflecting mind,

7. *By contemplating the relation which baptized children sustain to the Church.*

Having by the act of the parent received the seal of the great ecclesiastical covenant, they are included in the relative promise made to the parent. They will not be included in the personal promise of grace made to the believer, until they exercise the faith required. On the profession of genuine faith in the triune God, their baptism becomes to them a token of their personal interest in his saving grace. Until they will do this, they are not permitted to commune at his table, nor to present their own children in consecration. Thus by their voluntary impenitence and unbelief, they exclude themselves from fellowship with the Church. Their own dedication to God in childhood, if they resist the righteous claim, cannot qualify them for the Lord's supper, or for the baptism of their households, because these are ordinances in which they must personally act, and the action required is the exercise and expression of living faith. In this holy manner the ancient Hebrew was commanded to observe the ordinances of the Church, and he was forbidden to participate with a wicked heart. Ps. l. 16 : "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that thou shouldst take my covenant* in thy

mouth?" This relation, while it does not authorize them to enjoy the privileges peculiar to believers, does, however, powerfully affect their condition.

It binds the Church to watch for their souls, through their parents. By consecrating them to Christ, the parents have covenanted to labor for their salvation. By the Church covenant, all the members have engaged to watch over each other in this respect, as well as in all others. If, then, a parent neglects his duty, the Church is bound by her covenant with him to admonish him faithfully, and to require the performance. If she does not do this, she breaks her covenant. The pastor, too, is pledged to watch over the Church, the parents, and the children, and see to it that family worship, government, instruction, and the ordinances of the Sabbath and sanctuary, are secured to every household of his Church. The well regulated and faithful covenant-keeping Church will certainly make it sure that the baptismal vows are regarded. Of course, if the Church regarding this relation does thus, through the parents, act on the lambs of the flock, their moral character and condition must be moulded under her influence. In another manner still this relation affects their condition.

It binds the parents to press upon them the claims of the Church. Suppose the child well instructed in the principles of his consecration—that God, by ordaining it, has turned the eye of the Church especially upon him, and has presented both his righteous claim and his merciful offer by the hand of parental affection—apples of gold in pictures of silver. The question at once arises, shall I acknowledge that claim and accept that offer? God having mercifully propounded them—my parents having coincided with them—shall I comply? It is difficult to perceive in what manner the gospel proposal could be introduced to the mind

of a young child, better adapted to enlist his intellect and melt his heart.

Suppose, now, that child witnesses the communion.—Not being permitted to partake, he inquires the reason? The parent explains. In participating with me in this ordinance, you would profess that with an honest heart you have trusted in Christ. You have given me no evidence that you are prepared to make this profession. I am grieved that you are not. Will you now consent to the entire surrender which, as a parent, I made of you to Christ? Will you from this time be his, unreservedly, and forever? O, do not exclude yourself from these privileges any longer.

Suppose the parent weekly, daily, should urge his household to be prepared for the next communion—that he should expostulate, portray the divine mercy, dwell on the guilt of a refusal, on the danger of procrastination, on the strong motives for immediate compliance. Now it is manifest that this method of parental exertion, springing, as it does, legitimately from the nature of the relation itself, and existing just so far as that relation is understood and felt, cannot fail to furnish seasons in the domestic history, when the sense of personal responsibility will be overwhelming, and when the thrilling call of the gospel will pass down into the deep places of the soul. This relation, moreover, has another bearing.

It binds all the members of the Church to watch for the souls of the household when the parents die. When God in his holy providence calls the parent away, that parent has a right to point the Church to his orphan boy, and say, *Woman, behold thy son!* The influence of such feelings is elevating—salutary—auspicious in the highest degree. It is wonderful: my soul thrills when I call to mind this

precious legacy of the righteous. Tales of melting sweetness might be recited, of the power and practical operation of the orphan's promise ; especially of the promises to the dying believer, in behalf of the consecrated child. When the special provision which God has made for the salvation of the child, is removed by his own providence, he seems himself to take the parent's place, and he is generally seen to do it through his Church. Analagous to this last remark, on the relation here considered, is another, that by virtue of it,

The consecrated child, wherever he may wander, may always find those that will care for his soul. He may say to the Christian, wherever he meets one, Your brother and sister gave me to your God ; in their name, and for his sake, I ask your prayers. He is a connection of the great family, not merely by the ties of blood, but by the delineation of divine mercy. Wherever such a youth makes himself known, or is known as a child of the covenant, the Church is bound to plead those covenant promises in his behalf. It surrounds the homeless wanderer with a thousand guardian spirits ; better for not being angels, if indeed they are those to whom appertaineth the adoption ! with the covenants and the glory !

8. *The practical uses of infant consecration are manifest, in view of the preservation and prosperity of the Church, throughout successive ages.*

Previous to the Abrahamic covenant, its fundamental principles operated surely, but more silently. The express, definite covenant, with its sacred seal, was unknown, and therefore their native force was not fully developed. Yet,

Through all the veins of ages household streams
Oozed from their sacred fountains.

The current, however, although subterranean, can sometimes be traced by the verdure above it. After the establishment of this institution, the pathway of its in-

fluence, through the successive periods, is as distinct and luminous as the galaxy in the heavens. The waters of mercy have rolled down from age to age, since the fountain covenant was opened, in this one conspicuous channel. Where this ordinance has been fundamentally perverted, the Church has been corrupted, but her spiritual prosperity has always attended its faithful observance. Even since, in one portion of the Church, it has been laid aside as an unwarranted ceremony, there have not only been no particular tokens of approbation discoverable toward those who have done so, but the healthiest and noblest tide of prosperity has flowed on in the ancient channel, and the evil tendencies of the disuse are already visible in the short space of a few generations. "You must," said an aged minister to his brethren, "you must dedicate your *children* to God, as well as your meeting house. Our children are growing up uninstructed—they are hunting on the Sabbath—they are becoming skeptical—you must awake, and dedicate them to God." And although the good and venerable father in Israel was careful to state that he did not intend to urge the dedication of children, *by the affusion of water*, in the name of the Trinity, his exhortation implied, that where the *form* did not exist, there was but little of the *power*, and where infant dedication was neglected, there was an alarming tendency to the neglect of all visible religion.

The truth is, there is a sweet and holy influence connected with this institution, which passes into the closet, as well as in the family circle ; and which is shed over the great congregation, as well as into the soul, that shutteth the door and prayeth to Him who seeth in secret. It tends to impress the parents, the children, the community, with the solemnity of the marriage covenant. It unfolds its primary and its heavenly design, and makes those sins which set it at defiance appear peculiarly abominable. The value of

these, the legitimate impressions of this ordinance, cannot be too highly appreciated. Especially, in view of all these practical bearings, does the importance of this institution seem manifest, as connected with the system of missionary operations. Tending, as it does, to give permanency to Christian establishments by its bearing on successive generations, we have reason to hail with joy the formation of every new Church among the heathen, on the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. An encouraging prospect is before us, even in most disheartening present labors, because we know that the God of that everlasting covenant has, in all ages, thus illustrated the reality of his promise by the whole course of his providence in the preservation and prosperity of Zion.

The practical importance, therefore, of infant consecration, is fully evinced by an extended examination of its influence. The writer commenced these discussions under the firm belief that, important as the inductive philosophy is to human science, it cannot be permitted to control the theories of revelation; that if any scheme of doctrine is sanctioned in the word of God, it may be adopted without hesitation, and the universe of facts may be trusted to furnish a continued scene of varied and appropriate illustration. After the survey which we have taken of the actual bearings of this practice, we may, however, return with warmer impressions of confidence to the theory with which it is indissolubly connected in the word of God. How rational, how consistent, and sublime, is that theory! How gloriously it illustrates the wisdom of the Infinite Mind, and the benevolence of his unfailing counsels.

We behold him taking the great principle of the moral universe—*that mind is ordained to exert moral influence over mind universally and forever*—and applying it to the probation of man in a most emphatic manner, *by means of the*

family constitution and the consequent relationship of generations—and when the fall of man, and the certain depravity of all his generations, rendered this principle powerful for evil, we behold him incorporating it, by means of the family constitution into all the methods of restoring mercy, that it might be equally powerful for good. Then, as the covenant of redemption had secured *in Christ, and for him*, the certain renovation and salvation of great multitudes from all generations, *the consecrated household influence was made the main channel of his grace, for the accomplishment of this eternal purpose.* Moreover, as the *covenant of grace* secured in Christ the pardon, perseverance, and progressive holiness of every believer, a foundation was thus laid, in its very nature, for securing that *permanent, holy parental influence, during his lifetime, over his descendants.* Therefore, in order that a holy influence of mind over mind might be secured, as a channel of grace, during all time, through the household constitution, he first established his visible Church on the *covenant of grace* ; placed in her hands this *powerful family influence* ; encouraged her by revealing his *gracious design*, and wrought the elements of the three *into the Abrahamic covenant* ; thereby making it a glorious administration of grace, and confirmed it by a solemn seal for a thousand generations. As that covenant thus contained the personal promise of persevering grace to the *believer*, and a distinct and precious promise of spiritual blessings to the *believing parent*, in behalf of his descendants, the same seal was applied both to the parent and the child ; the claim of God to both thus being asserted, and the consecration of both being necessarily implied, on the part of the parent, in his own voluntary act of receiving the appropriate seal for himself and his household. Thus, through all the ages of the old dispensation, God was erecting his spiritual temple on this foundation ; gathering his polished stones chiefly from

the Jewish nation ; and by the very peculiarities of the ancient economy, preparing for the Messiah's advent. When the Saviour appeared, and that same spiritual temple was to derive its materials from all nations, the Christian dispensation was established ; inheriting the ancient covenant, with confirmed, augmented, and elevated privileges, extending its vital principles over vaster regions of mind, and embracing, as the result of their practical operation, the triumphs of a universal gospel.

Such is the outline of the scriptural theory of infant consecration. We have called it *sublime* ; perhaps we should characterize it better by the appellations *grand* and *beautiful*. It presents before us—

That covenant sealed—that deep domestic fount,
Whence streams of life perennial flow ; where flowers
Of holy promise, all unwithering bloom.
There, too, great Spirit of redeeming grace !
(Amidst these principles and changeless truths,)
There thou, enthroned, abidest ; at whose feet
The ages of redemption roll and shine.

CHAPTER XI.

Household consecration, in its administration. The Wyandot Chief.
The baptism.

IF, to the reflecting and believing mind, this ordinance be grand and beautiful in theory, it must in administration be animating and impressive. This indeed is evident from the fact, that even the untutored mind, if awakened by parental love, and inspired by gospel truth, is able to feel its attraction, and to glow with its vital elements. As an illustration of this, the story of the Wyandot Chief might be adduced. Converted to Christ in the wilderness, he travelled a great distance with his little son, in order to visit a band of Christian ministers, and commit him to their charge, to be educated for the Lord. He stood amidst the Presbytery, and consecrated him to the service of Jehovah. He asked them to undertake the education of his son, and when they assented, he required them to give him a written pledge that they would be faithful to their solemn charge. When this deed of faith was accomplished he returned, confiding, satisfied, rejoicing. Suppose this poor Indian had witnessed the Christian father and mother consecrating their infant children to Jehovah, would there not have been, even in his untutored mind, an apprehension of its propriety, and an inward fellowship with the parental vows and hopes? How much more, then, shall the scene of infant consecration be appreciated, when the mind has entered deeply into its spiritual design, and incorporated with its strongest emotions these everlasting principles.

To the thoughtless it may seem a vain ceremonial and

an unscriptural rite ; but to the studious heart, to the enlightened parent, to the instructed children, and to “their angels which do always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven,” it will reveal, through its humble aspect the grandeur of its eternal relations. To them it is in truth—

A scene of glowing beauty ! 'Tis the day
When Zion gathers to the house of prayer.
Behold a young and godly pair advance,
And in the presence of that solemn flock
Present their offering to the King of saints—
Their first-born son, a holy child of faith.
Then, as the angel of the Church implores
‘The God of Abraham for his changeless love
To those believing parents, and their seed,
How low they bow, how earnestly commit
That child of love and beauty to his grace,
In that deep prayer uniting. Who can tell
How strong the father’s purpose, or how full
The fond maternal heart, as on the brow
Of that fair infant, in affusion holy,
The man of God the sealing water sheds.

See, 'midst the scene, that infant aspect glow
With beams of glory ; for the smile suppressed,
The rich parental tear and mutual glance—
Tokens expressive of glad faith within—
Fall sweetly on it. Lo ! the triune God
Hath set a glorious seal, his own great name,
On that immortal creature. Guardian forms
Pledge to each other, to the Church, to God,
That they will guide him in the ways of truth,
Watch o’er him as a consecrated thing,
And train his spirit for the Lord of hosts.
O, how it girds the soul up—that deep voice
In the pure musings of the inmost heart—
“*Fear not, O parent, I will be a God
To thee and thine !*” How rich that promise seemed,
As from that sacred altar they returned,
Bearing, amidst the yearnings of their faith,
A sealed spirit ! Greeting their return,
Some aged Simeon, or some Anna, rich
In heavenly treasures and in title-deeds

To everlasting promises, would hail them
With kiss of love, with long and holy kiss,
Involving and expressing on the cheek
Of that dear infant the unsullied faith
Of ancient generations, and bestow
The patriarchal blessing on his head.

How felt those parents as, retiring calm,
Tender, resolved, with lofty purpose filled,
They to their own sweet home rejoicing bore
The gift of God, the child of covenant love,
Their holy offspring ! Never, till then, O, never
Seemed, in their view, that beauteous babe so dear—
Seemed that sweet home so glorious, so refined !

O ! 'twas like heaven, as with a mutual care
They placed the cradle by the altar's side,
And, kneeling where their loved one sleeping smiled,
Renewed before the ancient household shrine
The heart-felt consecration ; then implored
That grace which He, the God of promise, sealed
To them and theirs. If faith, which works by love,
Be strong with God, strong in prevailing prayer,
Then rose that altar's incense pure to heaven,
And angels looked upon that sacred spot,
Where bloomed the rose of Eden—looked and said,
How sweet the work to guard it ! Ah, many, many
Such glorious watching places angels find
Round Zion's sunny hills and streams of grace.

Think not that angel visits are but "few
And far between." Oft at the rosy morn,
Or the still quiet evening, lo, they come,
Spirits invisible, to watch, to *kneel*
In the loved circle of a covenant home,
Strengthening the saint, the father, while he prays,
And leads e'en guardian angels to the throne.

Celestial work ! high, elevating task !
To wear the unsullied ephod, which is cast,
By God's own mercy, round the household priest,
As trembling he advances. As he leads
To the pure shrine the partner of his cares,
O, how their souls commingle ! How the power
Of minds united, fired, and giving forth,
Into one prayer, issues of endless life,
Wrestles in *words* of faith, and *tones* of love.

The new creation pours its shining truths
 In one strong argument : the radiant law,
 Claiming for God life's earliest loves and hopes—
 The immortal soul of infancy ; the cross
 That op'd the gates when came the Holy Dove,
 Bearing the peace-branch, wet with purest dew
 Of paradise restored ; the fall of man,
 The chain of ages ; generations linked,
 For good or evil, bearing from earliest guilt
 Sin to each life, and second death to death ;
 Redemption's glorious scheme ; and covenant grace,
 Poured like a stream in sunlight, and in joy
 From age to age—all, all these lofty truths
 Press on the soul, and form themselves in prayer.
 And prayer, so formed, shall lodge its great request
 Deep in the bosom of its covenant God,
 Shall grasp the chain of promises, and bind
 Around the loved that spiritual string of pearls—
 Pearls of great price—gems of especial grace,
 Hung, like the shield of knighthood, on the just—
 Or like the star that gilds the royal brow,
 Glows on the patriarch's forehead, and beseems
 The crown of glory, such as Christ bestows
 On heavenly princes. Higher than all degrees
 Of earthly heraldry—beyond all gems
 Of empire—purer, brighter, costlier far.

In the course of thought pursued in this chapter, I have rather followed the promptings of my heart than the prescriptions of method. There is, indeed, so much of powerful and attractive beauty in this ordinance, that it is calculated to impart intellectual enjoyment, as well as salutary religious impression. Indeed, we have always reason to exclaim, "How *amiable* are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts !" in reference to all the methods of his grace, and all the ordinances of his worship,

CHAPTER XII.

Practical reflections. Application of these principles to parents.

THE grand object of this discussion having been to promote the practical influence of this ordinance, I trust that the different classes concerned in it, will permit me to address them with such reflections as the principles before us authorize. In the first place, I solicit the attention of parents. To them this argument proclaims that *the parental relation itself is of deep and solemn import*. It is a relation which no angel may sustain ; which in the higher grades of intelligence no being but God sustains. Its design is to educate souls for an endless and blissful existence. God has therefore confined, and adapted it, through the institution of marriage, to such a mode of existence as should effectually conduce to the spiritual welfare of all the parties concerned. This ordinance of infant consecration, has stamped this relation with the seal of infinite mercy and gracious protection. It regards the parent as a being loaded with interests and responsibilities which draw hard on the far-reaching cords of eternity. As he climbs up the straight path, and the bright but rugged way, it beckons him on ; it shines about his steps ; it reaches forth the hand of promise, and clasps the hand of his faith to lift him up and lead him higher, till the path is all brightness, and the day is perfect. Through this ordinance, the Church has taken hold of the marriage institution, and of the parental relation, thus sanctifying them for her own appropriate and lofty purpose.—The destination of the Church is so glorious, and the pur-

poses of her existence so spiritually grand, that the parental relation deriveth from this connection and subserviency a corresponding sacredness and grandeur. It is no light thing that this relation should be publicly designated as the main channel between the high designs of the spiritual Church and their accomplishment in the salvation of immortal souls.

It is no light thing for the parents to sustain this relation through which the redeeming grace is poured. It will be no trifling matter for the impenitent parent, that he refused to acknowledge the benevolent claims of the Church upon his parental influence. It will sound strange to the august spectators of the judgment, that he strove to wrench it away from the tenure of the Church, and secured his own offspring from all participation in the blessings of the covenant. There will then be appalling disclosures as to the manner in which the human heart has scorned all the approaches of the Church, in these provisions of mercy. It will then appear, (what it really is,) most amazing infatuation, that the impenitent parent could so deliberately bind around the souls of his children the ligatures of moral pollution. It is abhorrent to all the instinctive principles of unfallen moral natures, or of ransomed spirits, whether made perfect in heaven, or going on towards perfection on earth, that parents can seat themselves beside their babes with thoughtless levity, to weave into the open heart of childhood the principles of eternal woe. What! are not the passions of your child sufficiently ardent, unless you stimulate them with the ingredients of madness! Are not the tendencies of his depraved heart sufficiently malign, unless you mingle into them the elements of eternal despair? Are not the temptations of Satan and the wiles of the pit enough to effect his ruin, unless you shall engage in the conspiracy? Will not his moral interests be sufficiently

exposed in this guilty world, unless you carefully withdraw from them a parent's protection? Let the impenitent parent look to this. Through this ordinance, your insulted God demands your child. He claims from you, in behalf of that child, that family, a holy parental influence. He promises, if you will yield to his claim, to make that holy influence of yours a channel for his own, and to transcribe from the moral lineaments of your own mind the characteristics of holiness on the heart of your child. If you refuse this claim, and pass on impenitent, he will permit the spirits of darkness to amuse themselves in painting on the soul of your child the moral likeness of its parent. He now calls upon you in every public administration of this ordinance, to decide whether you will have a holy character; and hence the promise of the Spirit to transmit its features from generation to generation; or whether you will have a character of pollution, and have that same character wrought by the agency of Satan into that of your offspring unto the third and fourth generation. These inquiries must be answered without delay, for the terrible portraiture is already going on. Even while you *hesitate*, the image is assuming its ineffaceable lineaments. Awake, and give yourself and give your child over into the bosom of the covenant, and into the dominion of the Holy Ghost, if you would escape a speedy and a multifold damnation. Strive! yearn! struggle! for, peradventure, even yet, the plague may be stayed. You must meet that child whom you withhold from Christ, at the judgment seat. You must *there* account for the perversion of that family influence. *There* a strict inquiry will be made into all the history of your household relations. There you must meet the glance of every child whom your example has corrupted, your neglect has ruined, and your perverted influence has moulded for the scenes of the pit. You must meet him amidst those

scenes. How terrible that meeting in such a place ! *There* will be the ungodly parents, with their ungodly children. There will be reason, unclouded, tracing, in the light of eternity, the connection between the household influences and the horrible pit.

There will be memory recalling, with the vividness of immortality, each event in the whole series of fireside agencies, by which the utter ruin of your offspring was perfected. There will be *fancy* portraying, with terrible brilliancy of conception, the realities of eternally augmenting woe. *There* will be conscience, binding fast about the soul the scorching chains of truth ; and pouring from its vials of unmitigated wrath the scalding anguish of remorse. *There* will be self-will ; unsubdued malicious passion, goaded into frenzy ; unmingled depravity, assuming its hue of settled and festering blackness ; and *there*, and *then*, and *thus*, will the group of lost children gather round the neglectful, the unbelieving, and the prayerless parent ! The companionship which was most intimate here will be most appalling there. The endearments which were most valued here will be changed into most disgusting bitterness there. The circle where the smile of impenitent joy was lighted most brightly, and the image of impenitent parents reflected most softly ; where impenitent hopes were most warmly cherished, and impenitent songs most sweetly chanted ; will, if transported *there*, become the *circle* whose aspect, whose reflected image, whose despair and wailing, will seem, to the impenitent parent, most hateful and agonizing, amid all the groups of hell. Harken to the warning voice, O impenitent parent ! To thee, guilty as thou art, the gospel yet offers *pardon*. It proposes to adopt thee into the family of God. It proposes, even now, to bring salvation to thine house. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou and thy house shall be saved. There is room for

thee, and room for thine offspring ! The footsteps of eternal mercy are heard about thy dwelling. She knocks loudly at thy door—she implores thee to admit her, for the sake of thine own soul, for the sake of thine idolized children. She offers thee, for them, the blessings of the everlasting covenant. She throws open its door, and cries aloud, Come thou and all thy house into the *ark*.

To pious parents I may speak with confidence. They will feel, that if God has indeed established this ordinance on the principles advocated in these chapters, their relation to their children is most tender and momentous. Their marriage covenant itself assumes a loftier and a sweeter aspect. It is a mutual league, not for purposes of personal advantage, but for high and overwhelming objects. It is a league to defend a group of immortal souls from the wiles of the devil ; to instruct them, from extremest ignorance, into the mightiest truths of religion ; to constitute a channel for the eternal influx of sanctifying grace ; to train up agents destined to exert a heavenly influence on their associates in time ; to educate and qualify them for the deep, sacred companionships of heaven ; to form, out of the ties of natural affection, bonds imperishable, of sweet, celestial love ; and finally, to polish and fashion them to be stones in that spiritual temple in which the fulness of the triune God resides forever ; living in every part, and through every part shining out, irradiating the intelligent universe with his light, and eternity itself with his glory. If these are thy hopes, Christian parent, O with what earnest grasp shouldst thou lay hold of covenant promises. With what untiring labor shouldst thou bind all the healthy influences of the household covenant about the soul of thy child ! With what assiduous carefulness shouldst thou sow the ideas of the covenant in the soil of his earliest emotions ! How shouldst thou water them with thy tears, and beseech the Spirit of all

grace to warm them into life and productiveness by his own vital energy! How shouldst thou be concerned, lest thy partner in life should grow remiss in duty! How careful should ye be not to embarrass each other! How anxious mutually to strengthen each other in your appropriate and respective duties! How ardently should you plead the promise, "Where two or *three* are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them to bless them."

Perhaps you can each number, in the ancestral line of your fathers' house, a company of holy, faithful believers in the covenant. Perhaps a cloud of witnesses encompass your habitation. Lay hold, then, of the age-lasting covenant. Avail yourselves of their precious intercessions—intercessions and corresponding labors from which the heavenly influences have descended like dew on your own souls; make all these the heritage of your children's children, by renewing the intercession and imitating the labor. Let all the inward yearnings of your own souls concentrate their power to weave, from these household truths, "the ark of bulrushes," for the infant Moses; and place it among the flowers of promise, which bloom along the Nile of the Church—the river of the everlasting covenant. Art thou aware, Christian parent, that death will soon sever thee from thy partner? That thou shalt soon be called away to leave thy partner with the uncompleted charge? O! how should the certainty of this separation, and the uncertainty when it shall occur, or which shall first be called, constrain thee to live in such a manner, that if thou art first called, thou mayst leave behind thee the legacy of a parent's prayers, and the memory of a parent's instruction—and the lustre of a partner's holy example. So let thine energy be, that the surviving partner shall be admonished by the memory of thy faithfulness to augmented diligence, and encouraged in view of the covenant promise—that treasure-house

for the prayers of a departed ancestry—to sing for joy even amid the loneliness of widowhood. Perhaps even now there follows these lines the moistened eye of some widowed parent. O! to thee how solemnly, how sweetly does this ordinance speak! How delightful the thought, that thou hast consecrated thy family to that God into whose presence thy partner has ascended! How solemn, if the responsibilities which formerly rested on both are now rolled upon thee alone! How comforting, in these circumstances, to lean on that arm which oft sustained both, and which now is especially pledged to sustain thee, because thou art lonely. How glorious the thought, that thou mayest now lay hold of the all-sufficient covenant with greater confidence than ever! How consoling, to lead the fatherless or the motherless into his banqueting house, and to sit under his banner of love!

Perhaps some parent reads this, whose agonized soul exclaims, My partner is living, but hath no hope in Christ, no portion in covenant promises. O then, let the interests of thy family prompt thee to redoubled diligence for their salvation. If one-half of the parental influence is withheld or perverted, to which that young group are entitled, be it your determination so to live, that the deficiency shall be, as far as possible, supplied, or the adverse influence counteracted. Thou wilt need large supplies of grace; but his grace is sufficient even for thee. Be resolved, moreover, to plead the full power of the covenant for thy partner's conversion. "For what knowest thou, O wife! whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man! whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Plead that the unconverted may be taught of the Lord, in order that thy household may be saved, and the full design of the marriage institution be secured. Let the glory of divine grace, as manifested through the covenant, be the grand argument

in thy prayer ; and, like Jacob wrestling, cry, " I will not let thee go, except thou bless me ! "

On the whole, this ordinance is calculated powerfully to impress us with the importance of holiness of life. The pious parent should remember, that he is not merely to seek the conversion of his children, but to seek to educate them for unblemished, consistent, and eminent Christians. If he wishes this for his family, he must sustain this character himself. If he backslides, if he falters, or wavers ; if he is grossly deficient, if he is guilty of outbreking sin, he has reason to expect that the effects of his transgression will be terribly visited on his children, even if so as by fire, he and they shall be saved. The standard of Christian character must be high in the aim of parents, if we expect to have it high in the purpose of their children.

That the standard of personal piety should be vastly elevated in the Church of God, is painfully manifest. Unless it is, we shall never witness the full power of the gospel in this guilty world. It is by the beauty and energy of evangelical holiness that religion is to shine and advance. The glory of God, the excellency of his government, the specimens of his holiness, are to be exhibited through the moral features of his visible Church. The day of universal triumph for Zion is thus to be introduced, perpetuated, and glorified. On the parents, therefore, of this generation the responsibility rests of moulding the character of the millennial Church. Never before seemed the provisions of this covenant so infinitely important as at the present crisis. O that its many voices might break like sevenfold thunder on the slumbering parents of the present generation. Ye men of Israel, who bear the vessels of the Lord ; who wait around the courts of this altar, where still the Shechinah tarries, awake ! Ye parents, ye holy watchers about the fountains of holiness for unborn ages, be care-

ful how ye tread. One false parental step may crush a thousand interests ! One holy, consecrated parent may yet descry, from the hills of God, some sweet, perpetual stream of far distant ages issuing from the fountains which his faith replenished.

CHAPTER XIII.

Practical reflections. Application of these principles to *fathers*.

THE train of thought which we have pursued, urges me to address a few considerations to those who are not only parents, but *fathers*. It proclaims that the *paternal relation is pre-eminently responsible*. May I not hope that the fathers will listen while I attempt to utter, in appropriate words, its deep and earnest tones. Its call to you is peculiarly loud, *because you are the constituted head of the family. This station you hold by right of nature, of necessity, and the marriage covenant*. Duties grow out of relations. The relation of your sex to the other, is that of the primary to the secondary ; of the original to the derived ; of the strong to the weak—as is manifest in the order of creation and the constitution of nature. The duties arising from these relations are to cherish, to love, to protect, and to provide. The obligation, thus arising, being as durable as the relations themselves, constitutes the foundation and the safety of the marriage covenant. The marriage covenant, therefore, has bound you, as an individual, to perform these duties towards the wife of your choice. In the same manner these relations have been extended to your offspring, and these duties are extended as far and as perpetually as these relations. The mother shares with you in the obligations, just in that degree that she shares the extended relations, and therefore subordinately. Your share in them both being primal and paramount, it binds down to

your soul a corresponding weight of responsibility. You, then, as a husband and father, are held supremely responsible both to man and to God, for the support, defence, and welfare of your family. You first sought the matrimonial connection in which you are placed. It was yours first to select; first to mature the proposals and present them.—You, in the marriage ceremony itself, first avowed your preference and your purpose—first gave the sacred pledge. From the nature of things, from the necessity of the case, and from the marriage covenant, you have been set forth as the constituted head of the household. On you, therefore, the heaviest bearings of the covenant of consecration are made to rest. Your responsibilities are the corner stone on which its claims are based. That covenant claims your offspring for Christ, and demands of you, as the authorized head, an explicit consent. That covenant claims your paternal influence for Christ, and demands that you, as the head of that family, shall sincerely pledge it to him, and exert it for him. That covenant points you to a code of laws ordained for those young immortals, and claims the whole weight of your supreme authority to sustain and enforce them. That covenant is a system of protection graciously provided in their behalf, from the tyranny of sin and the curse of the law; from the temptations of the world and the wiles of the devil. It claims, therefore, not only that the united parents shall, as such, take hold of it—but that you, in your relation as father, in your station as the head of the household, shall stand forth, and pledge that all the power which God has vested in your hands for these purposes, shall be exerted to give your household its full advantages as a system of protection. Your obligation to stand forth in the obedience of faith in this great matter, as far exceeds your obligation to protect them against an attack of wild beasts or savage men, as the interest at stake

in this case exceeds that in the other. On you, therefore, pre-eminently, the responsibility rests of maintaining family government on the principles of the gospel. Of Abraham God said, I know him, that he will command his household after me. He expects that you will do the same ; that you will so rule your own house that your children shall be trained up in the way that they should go. He has placed before you solemn warnings against a refusal in the case of Adam, of Cain, of Eli, and of David. When he maketh inquisition for the blood of souls, shed amidst household scenes, he will call first for the *father*. Your name will be heard first, as Adam heard his, as Eli and David heard theirs, when the providence of God in one case and his prophet in the other, and his judgment in both, said, "Thou art the man !" The relation you sustain, which thus makes you prominent in responsibility, will set you forth prominent in the final retribution. That station being so conspicuous in view of your offspring, invests your conduct with great solemnity. The whole weight and power connected with it will be thrown on the side of covenant claims, or will operate against them. You cannot retain that station, and remain neutral on this question of consecration. You cannot justify yourself before the God of these relations, if you will not govern your life according to them. If, against the voice of God, and against the strong claims of his covenant, you deprive your household of this system of perfection, and lead them by your neglect or example into dangerous exposures, God will avenge *himself* of the insult, and your *immortal children* of the injury. He has bestowed upon each child a natural right to parental care, instruction, and example. He has demanded of the parents a solemn pledge that this right shall be regarded, and he calls upon you, as the *father*, to see to it that the pledge is both given and performed. The authority which you possess is conferred

upon you for the sake of the child ; and if you misemploy it, by using it for his worldly good only, or for purposes adverse to his spiritual and highest good, you will involve yourself in a condemnation which will be pre-eminently fearful.

Another consideration, which will illustrate the nature of parental responsibility, is, *that the father is the constituted priest of the household.*

Your household, Christian father, if regulated according to the principles of the covenant, resembles a little Church. Its members are consecrated to God ; its great object is his glory in the salvation of souls ; its daily meals are feasts of intimate communion, commemorating in the “ blessing ” and the “ thanks ” his abounding love. Its family worship speaks for itself. In all these respects it is your place to officiate. To administer its discipline ; to direct its religious services ; to dispense from the father’s seat—that sacred desk of the little sanctuary—the words of life ; to expound the sacred page ; to lead the confiding group to the throne of grace, is the office work of the father. These duties invest him, in the view of the observing flock, with a sacred character. The God of the household covenant has assigned to you this important station. From day to day, from year to year, your sentiments are thus to be uttered, and your deepest and strongest emotions to be exhibited in their presence. The events of the day ; the providences of the week ; the affecting incidents of the family, are to collect their lessons in your prayers and instructions at the family altar. If you are spiritually minded, the influence breathed through all the concerns of the week will be spiritual also. It is, therefore, vastly important that your attainments in evangelical knowledge and holiness should be great, eminent, and manifest. If you will feel this as you ought, your heart will burn to obtain the best qualifications,

and to acquit yourself honorably in view of witnessing angels, amidst these responsibilities. You will rejoice with pure and serene joy, if you are enabled to behold the mother, in her own peculiar sphere, cleaving to the Lord of the covenant. You will delight to enforce her judicious regulations with your decisive authority, and embody her affections and persuasions in your paternal counsels and prayers.

How guilty are those fathers who publicly profess religion, and yet who will not act as the priest of their household ; whose voice, if heard in prayer, would sound strange in the ears of those children who often behold them at the table of the Lord. If there is one such father now reading these remarks, I conjure him to repent. I beg of him to remember, that God will hold him responsible for depriving his family of these sacred rights, which he has demanded for them in the very provisions of the covenant. Your neglect, O guilty professor, embarrasses your partner in life ; if she is pious, it discourages her exertions ; if she is impenitent, it will probably ruin her soul.

To the impenitent father these views come with imploring earnestness, and with alarming import. Perhaps, a pious wife, in the ear of her child, has to explain why the father does not pray. Perhaps the thoughtful child that has visited where the family altar was honored, sits wondering in her mind why her father does not pray. Perhaps in the simplicity of childhood, she asked you, why you do not pray. Perhaps you are called to stand in the place of your aged father, now superannuated or departed, and that on you rests the guilt of causing the voice of prayer to cease in the ancient mansion, whose walls had for ages been consecrated by the holy words of faith, and the simple rites of the patriarchal Church. If any or all of these impressive circumstances put in their plea for God, how stubborn must that heart be, which shall interpose between the descending

blessings of consecrated ages past, and the immortal interests of ages to come, and erect the barriers of unholy parental influence, to roll back the living waters. Perhaps, if you have no such pious ancestry, you have lured away from the God of her fathers your devoted wife, and are standing between her soul and the spiritual good which, were it not for your influence, she would have secured to herself and her children.

Yet, if no such peculiar fact is connected with your history, there are two great facts connected with your paternal relation, which should arouse you to repentance. One is, that God will call you to account, as the head of the family, for all your abuse of the sacred powers with which he invested you. The other is, that he will demand of you a reason for your refusal to act as his minister, in the circle where he placed you. From this station of responsibility you cannot descend, so long as your paternal relations exist. The final account will of course be called for. What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? "Prepare to meet thy God," impenitent father. Be sure, moreover, that he will not meet thee as a man.

3. The responsibility of the father is manifest from the fact, that he transmits his name, and the great historical associations of the family, through all the periods of time. Is it no object to you, Christian father, that the name which is written on the Lamb's book of life, and that which you transmit to innumerable descendants, should pass down, laden with promises; venerable for its Christian renown, and revered for its holy memories? Is it nothing to you, that either you now inherit such a name from ages past, or now may thus present in the chancery of the covenant your own name, for ages to come? It is a great thing for a *father* to have his name written in the book of life. It is written on the bright leaf of the covenant of grace, ensured

for free pardon ; for sanctification, and perseverance ; for final glory. It is written on the leaf of the household covenant, adorned with the personal promise of grace, on one page, and with the everlasting household promise on the other. An edition of the book of life, published, so far as it may be to mortals, for the use of the Church. Will it be no joy, to have angels continue to announce it, for the delight of heaven, that another and another of distant generations, bearing that name, have repented ? Will it not be above all earthly applause, to hear the ancient inhabitants of heaven respond "that same name, that old, familiar name ?" This is the glory, the honor, the immortality, of the faithful father. In these methods, surely, the name of the just shall be held in everlasting remembrance.

But the name of the wicked shall rot. Is it nothing to you, O impenitent father, that whatever honors may be associated with your name, in the records of worldly glory, it shall be indelibly disgraced in heaven ? Is it nothing, that as to the third and fourth generation, thy influence descends upon those that wear thy name, "the tormentors" shall calmly await the death of thy descendants, as affording a sure addition to their number, or taunt thee with astonishment, if any of thine come not to the place of their dwelling ? Is it nothing, when the overcoming mercy of God shall supplant thy influence, and elevate that name, as worn by distant ages, amidst the salvations of the millennium, to have it distinctly recorded, that had not thy influence been especially counteracted by his sovereign grace, thou wouldst have sent it down disgraced amidst all those glories ? Is it nothing, to expose those that wear it, to those terrible judgments which will prepare the way for the millennium, by the extermination of the ungodly ? Is it nothing, amidst the revelations of the judgment, to have thy name, as transmitted along with thine influence, stained

with all manner of crime, and characterized by all degrees of rebellion, through various ages? Ah! how will it appear, when the searchings of the judgment shall reveal the hearts that have gloried beneath it? Reveal those hearts, in all the history of their outbursting influence, and the secrecy of their vilest passions! Pause, O impenitent father, and give thy name—thy patriarchal name—thine hereditary appellation—to the God of grace. Inscribe it, associated with the names of thy children, and of thy wife, on the Abrahamic covenant! The wings of that covenant are lifted, to cover thee! O come thyself, and gather thy children under them!

The responsibility of the *father* is pre-eminently great. He needs, therefore, to understand the covenant, in order that he may fully appreciate his responsibility, and at the same time be sustained under its pressure. He is the constituted head, priest, and representative of his household. He is invested with these offices by the unchanging ordinances of God. He may not retire from this station of responsibilities. Overwhelming motives call him to faithfulness. He needs to take advantage of all the covenant promises. His daughter, blending the mother's grace with the father's dignity, claims the guardianship of the covenant. The purity, the elevation of its principles, should be so wrought into the father's character, that his image in all times of temptation should rise upon her heart, like a guardian spirit, to purify, energize, and protect. His son, exposed in this bustling and licentious age, to a thousand snares, as he breaks forth from the scenes of the nursery and of quiet home, to mingle with the world, needs a father's thorough instructions, nobleness of example, unsullied reputation, and inspiring presence, to be at once a model of imitation and a wall of defence. The great enterprises of benevolence; the revolutionary spirit of the age; the great conflict of principles; the rising im-

portance of questions, of a moral nature, call loudly upon the fathers of this age to build the prospects of their sons on the enduring foundations of the gracious covenant. O, how unwise, how recreant to all sacred trust, is that father, who, not content with refusing to discharge his duty, does all he can to countervail the efforts of a believing wife; who, by his habitual ungodliness, his vile sentiments, and perhaps his outrageous abuse of conjugal relations, perverts all the high powers of usefulness which God has conferred upon him, into means of ruin for his offspring, and into stores of vengeance for himself. If such a father shall read this passage, I beg him to remember, that the God of the widow and the orphan will avenge upon his soul that conduct which, to his family, is worse than widowhood and orphanage. Perhaps God, to save the family, may cut him suddenly down, in order that the mother may freely perform the duties which he neglects, or at least exert her own influence, uncounteracted.

Perhaps the mother may be removed to a place where the wicked trouble not, while the father is left to mould and fashion morally his offspring according to his own character, and provide himself with accusers for the judgment seat, and with tormentors for the scenes of the pit. Terrible will be the fall of that father who tramples on the interests which the covenant is designed to protect, and defies the authority of that God who has pledged for its vindication, not only the issues of his grace, but the severity of his retribution.

CHAPTER XIV.

Practical reflections continued. Application of these principles to mothers.

IN applying the fundamental principles of this institution to those who are not only parents but mothers, I shall *suppose a mother situated as she is assumed to be, in its original and natural design.*

The father is supposed to fulfil the purposes of his peculiar relation, and to stand in his place the prophet, the priest, and the ruler of his household. He is supposed to concentrate his authority, strength, and official influence for the purposes of grace; to command his household after the Lord, and trust the life-giving promise; to lead the way in the act of dedication; and finally, to exercise such faith, that though his wife disbelieved, neglected, and opposed, his purpose would be fixed to establish the order of his house on the principles of consecration. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Job, and Joseph, were such fathers. Such is presumed to be the character of every Christian bishop, and through him as an exemplar of every Christian father. Such, therefore, is supposed to be the situation of the mother, wherever the covenant is completely recognized in a family. Suppose the mother to be decidedly pious, like the mother of John, of Jesus, or of Timothy. Then we have the covenant model for the domestic constitution.

Is it yours, my Christian sister, thus to be situated? Then you have reason to weep for joy, when you study the gracious covenant. You have presented a son or a daughter to that father. In his guardianship the heart con-

fides. You know that he will bear that child to the throne of grace ; that all the tenderness of your heart may be enlisted in its behalf, unchecked, unchilled, unimpeded. Nay, that you cannot better meet his strongest wishes, nor even otherwise satisfy his most cherished expectations, than by giving unrestrained activity to every holiest impulse, and baptizing every child with the gushing emotions of a believing mother. To you, how strong, how thrilling, how inexpressibly precious is this ordinance, in its holy claims and blessed assurances. The seal of God that is placed upon your child, is a memorial of mutual love, to strengthen with mighty motives your marriage vows and Church relations. It binds you both to the child, to each other, and to the Church of God. With this threefold cord it binds the child to the provisions of grace. How enrapturing must be your communion with your husband over the child of your vows ! Often does it resemble that of Zechariah and Elizabeth at the consecration of John. They did not doubt that John would be born again. Why may not your joy also be full ? They had a promise, so have you. They walked in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, so should you. They felt in their souls that the promise could never fail ; and you may, if you believe and live like them, enjoy the same assurance respecting the great promise, I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed. Only *believe*, and thou shalt see the salvation of God.

If, however, you are impenitent, faithless, and neglectful ; if you grieve your pious husband by your coldness, worldliness, vanity, and evil temper ; if you manifest aversion to all spiritual religion ; if you thwart rather than encourage his household plans, your criminality is appalling. You are guilty of perverting all those strong and tender influences which God has blended with the maternal relation, of wrenching away the spiritual interests of the child from

the endeavors of a believing father, by defeating his efforts and counteracting his example. There is one who will avenge that neglected group when he maketh inquisition for blood. He will mark your case as one of extreme guilt; for he has said, *Can a mother forget?* It would be enough, if, in any circumstances, you had spiritually deserted your child; but what will the unsleeping guardian of the covenant say to that mother, who, when her husband hath borne the child into the secret place of the Most High, will not let it abide under the shadow of the Almighty? O there is a spiritual savageness in the laugh of a worldly, heartless, and skeptical mother, which is enough to make one shudder! All the eloquent tones of a mother's love; all the tenderness of a mother's caress; all the outgoings of the maternal heart are fraught with poison for the soul of her child, if she has no fear of God, no regard for religion. If you have made the profession, it does not relieve the difficulty, while you retain a character adverse to your profession. Who is not shocked when woman commits herself to hardihood in sin, or in skepticism. An infidel mother is regarded, even by the world at large, as a shocking monster. How then must she, or any impenitent mother, be regarded in the sight of God! There are many such mothers in our land—many pious fathers are grieved at heart, at the mournful influence which the mother is shedding over their consecrated offspring. Her presence, about the deep and precious fountains of moral life, seems almost like sacrilege. Her touch dries up the early and genial impulses of the mind; her caress stings the soul; her constant gaze petrifies the heart. There, in the most sacred places of moral being, she daily breathes, and moves, and moulds the plastic character of childhood when the father is away. The grand deceiver need not concern himself as to his prospects in your family, so long as such a mother

watches for him, were it not for the covenant with the father. If your children are still living ; if their father still prays for them and for you, O come to God ! by all the glory of covenant relations ; by all the everlasting traces which you will leave on the character of your children ; by all the jealous scrutiny of your whole life and influence, which will take place at the judgment, come to the mercy-seat ! come to the covenant throne ! Kneel down by the side of your husband, and break your heart in penitence amidst your consecrated children !

2. *I shall suppose a mother situated in other circumstances—that her husband is impenitent, profane, and unwilling to consecrate either himself or family to God.*

Suppose that she, alone yet faithful, going before the altar, consecrates her children to the God of her salvation ; that she toils day and night to fulfil her vows ; with sleepless vigilance watches to guard them from evil, and to lead them in the way of life. As a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, so she, under the outspread wings of the covenant, gathereth them. Afflicted sister ! Persevere. Turn neither to the right hand nor the left. Shrink not from the high, and sublime, and glorious station to which Providence has lifted thee ! Resolve, that whatever may be the father's influence, God shall have that of the mother ; resolve to seek continually a double portion of covenant grace. Toil on, and murmur not—toil hard, and faint not ; and when your soul is wearied, wait on the Lord. Pillow your head on the covenant promise, and comfort your heart with the visions of Jacob. Then rising refreshed, shake thyself from the dust, O daughter of Zion ! Set up the stone of help, and still *toil on*. There is one that hath said, "*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*" Is your husband willing that you should train the children for God ? Be thankful for the divine mercy, and be diligent

to improve sacredly every capacity you possess for this purpose. There is nothing which will sooner affect the heart of a father, who has been rightly instructed, than to behold his pious wife consecrating the household *alone*, and toiling *alone* for their spiritual good. He knows who is responsible for suffering her to go forth *alone*. Many an impenitent child of the covenant has trembled when thus he saw his beloved wife venturing forth to stand in his deserted place. It is, therefore, wicked for any mother to defer a public profession, in order that her husband may come with her. I could mention several instances illustrative of the grievous consequences of neglecting duty, and of the happy results arising from its faithful performance. Is your husband opposed to your household piety, and disdainful towards religion? Then guard your temper with a double vigilance. Fill your heart with the veriest strength of benevolence. Seek his temporal comfort and happiness with assiduous concern; but never yield your religious principle; never forget your vows of consecration; never shrink from doing all your duty to your children. Does he use a profane expression in the presence of his wife or children? Let your tears of grief, let the manifest majesty of insulted piety seated in your eye and whole demeanor, testify against him. Does he inculcate erroneous sentiments in his household? Let your diligent, sure, and heaven-directed influence counteract them. Let all a mother's utmost energy be so put forth, that no occurrence shall ever be recalled in the remorseful remembrances of the dark world, to proclaim *that your unfaithfulness caused the ruin of one child*. On the brow of the father alone let that curse be written—if it must be written any where. But, O, thou woman of God! like Hannah, let your vows be deep; sacrifice any earthly interest, chasten into heavenly purity every emotion, bear any personal affliction whatever, en-

endure all wrong that may be endured without sin ; if so thou canst reach the soul of the father ; if thou mayest by any means deliver him from going down to the pit ; if even when he hath perished thou mayest be able to look up and say, *Lord, thou knowest that he did not perish through my neglect.*

3. *Suppose the mother in different circumstances still.* Suppose that the father is dead—that his pious example has ceased to guide, or his impenitent career no more leads astray. If God has left you lonely, look at once to him for strength, and step forward into the vacant place. His mantle is left with you. The divine providence has made you the head of the family, and you must preserve the ordinances of God in your household. It is your business now to minister at the family altar, to instruct the fatherless, and to rule with gentle but decisive authority. No widowed mother, who has a proper sense of her covenant obligations, will ever suffer the fires of the family altar to die away because the father is absent, or deceased. Let not the fear of your children deter you from doing your duty. Act as the covenant requires you to act, and the God of its promises will not suffer his faithfulness to fail.

4. The views presented in this book, call upon *mothers* throughout our land and the world, to arise and address themselves to the great work of establishing the gospel for all generations. A spirit is abroad, calling upon the priestess of the nursery to magnify her office. The world may treat it with contempt, but there is a power in that voice which is not to be mocked. It utters the great truths of household consecration ; it works in close affinity with the Spirit of God. Numerous maternal hearts are swelling under the mighty impulse. The maternal associations recently formed in our country, and now spreading in Europe, are the lyceums of the nursery. They are introducing

valuable publications, both volumes and periodicals, to the attention of mothers. They are conveying particular instructions to individual mothers, and preparing them for their silent but effectual operations. They are magnifying the mother's work in her own view ; creating a deeper and more powerful interest in the concerns of home ; taking the place of the tea party and scandal-retailing visits, of which former years complained so much ; and exciting an intellectual and spiritual interest in the highest welfare of the race. These institutions will continue to increase in value, and every mother should seek to obtain from them all practical aid in her appropriate and important duties. The institutions of our own land, dependent as they are and ever should be under God, upon the popular will, call loudly upon maternal mind to respect in its nursery cares the interests of the Church and the fates of nations. He that can estimate the tendencies of maternal influence may calculate shrewdly respecting the moral characteristics of the next generation. How inconceivably important, then, that the principles of household consecration should be graven deeply on the heart of American mothers, and of Christian mothers every where, and on maternal affection universally. This is an object most commanding in its importance, and if those principles are true, he that shall contribute essentially to elevate maternal mind to grasp them in their majesty, and apply them in their power, will do no mean service for the human race. Future generations will reverence his name, and his posterity shall be blessed.

CHAPTER XV.

Practical reflections. Application of these principles to the consecrated children of the Church.

THE natural order of thought now introduces me to the consecrated youth of the Church. I trust that many of you will seriously weigh the suggestions which I am about to make. It has often been my privilege to kneel by the side of parents while they have gathered their consecrated households at the family altar. The forms of many youth are present to my mind, for whom I have heard the believing father pray, in the language of promise-trusting faith. The forms of many children are present, on whom, in the hour of baptism, the tears of believing parents have fallen, almost mingling with the sacred water. Many such, I have reason to believe, will read these pages. For them and for every baptized child who shall read and consider these truths, I feel a deep and thrilling interest. Let me hope that every such reader will consider himself personally addressed. The first thought which I desire you to realize, is,

1. *That this ordinance of household consecration has created very interesting connections between you and the Church of Christ.*

Have you understood the nature and value of this connection? Consider *with whom* it is formed: The Church of Jesus Christ! And what is the Church? The invisible Church is that vast company of the regenerated, gathered from all ages and nations, which will finally meet in one

general assembly at the right hand of God. The visible Church consists of all those who profess to be among this number, and who unite in the regular observance of Christian worship. The moral grandeur of the Church, visible and invisible, is overwhelming. She is to constitute that channel through which the river of divine manifestation will flow forever. Through her appointed ordinances, she exhibits the glory of God on earth, and preserves the honor of his name from age to age. The presence of God is within her, as in the unconsumed yet burning bush of Horeb. There, as in a world created for the purpose, God exhibits the deep things of his own nature to the universe, not in its childhood only, but in its maturity. It is, indeed, a new creation, in which he has wrought the indestructible evidences of his triune existence, and his utmost moral glory, as he has into the material creation wrought the bright but perishable evidences of his being, and of his original perfections. This building of God, this new creation, will live and breathe forth that surpassing glory, and glow with the unconsuming presence which fills it when all the cords of the material creation shall be unstrung, and all its light and majesty shall have rolled away. There the peculiar and mysterious mode of the divine existence is incorporated as a perpetual and vital truth, revealed not in word only, but in the commemorative monuments of divine workmanship and intellectual transformation. There the Father shines in the spiritual *law*; there the *Son* in the precious atonement; there the Spirit in his high office work, moulding into the image of God, for eternity, the hearts of fallen men, regenerating, sanctifying, and eventually perfecting his spiritual workmanship, the active, living temple of ransomed mind. There, in the union, harmony, and perpetual combination of all the rays of truth which issue from the revealed character of Jehovah, the Church, the one

body of Jesus Christ, proclaims the unity, as well as the fulness of the Godhead. Subordinate to these prominent features of the new creation, the natural perfections of God are all furnished with intenser radiance than they can ever gather from the natural operations of providential agency. Not in all the living tokens of a present God, with which nature is clothed, does his energizing omnipresence so shine, as in the fruits, and flowers, and garniture of quickened mind, bursting all around us into life, and assuming the freshness of immortal beauty; not in all the majestic operations of the laws of nature, or of providence, linking in one perpetual chain the events of ages, or of moral government, uttering its thunders in the ear of individual guilt, or paralyzing with its shock rebellious nations: not in either or all of these does the omnipotence of God so gleam forth, as when it touches the immortal soul in the very place of free and decisive moral action, and preserving moral agency unimpaired, certainly and efficiently transforms it from the bitterness of supreme hate into the rapturous friendship of eternal love. Corresponding with these views, the moral perfections of Jehovah have also located in the very constitution of the Church their mightiest and sublimest exhibitions. Never, any where else, but in the foundation and in the several compartments of this building, could justice, in her most unsullied purity and most terrible frown, meet with mercy in her extremest tenderness, and most effectual, unrestrained outgoings of forgiveness; meet, not in toleration merely, but in lustre mutually enhanced and in fellowship, bursting forth with mutual rejoicings, and in one song, at the name of Jesus. Finally, that glorious development of the intellect and the heart of Jehovah, which shall overawe, elevate, and gladden the holy universe forever, is made through the Church, wrought into the Church, hung in folds of light about her, preserved in all the progress of her

growth in time, and shall be evolved yet more and more forever. Thus will the confirmed Church, as she holds on her shining and eternal course, constitute the galaxy of divine glory in the spiritual heavens. On her path thus radiant, suspended worlds will gaze ; on her history thus evolved, a thoughtful universe will dwell, and will open itself forever to these grandest manifestations of the triune God. While through the Church the moral glory of Jehovah is thus developed, there is, moreover, in her spiritual guardianship, life, safety, peace : in her deep communion of consecrated mind, that fellowship for which the human spirit thirsts. Its present interruptions warn us of its real value ; its future perfection is the richest, loftiest reward to which immortality can aspire. The connection which binds you as consecrated youth to this community is therefore of a most elevated and interesting nature. It rejoices my heart when I think how many of the dear children of the Church are now members in full communion, having sought her fellowship, acknowledged her claims, and devoted themselves to the covenant God. Often have I seen them approach, with humble but joyous aspect, to confess their guilt in rejecting so long the claims which were placed upon them in their childhood, and in voluntary covenant to avouch the God of their parents' faith and of their infant years, to be their God forever. To all such, this connection has resulted in its gracious design ; its legitimate tendency is made known. It is yours, therefore, to feel and exhibit its value. Your present membership should lead you to grateful recollection of your covenant God, in his early care, and your piety should be as eminent as your advantages have been distinguished. To that consecrated youth who has never consented to the terms of life, this connection speaks with unutterable tenderness and solemnity. It unfolds to you the overwhelming grandeur of the

Church in the most persuasive manner. It has taken that great name, which she wears as her crown of glory, and has sealed it upon your brow. It has publicly separated you from the world, and set you apart as the devoted property of Christ. It has placed you in the courts of the Lord's house ; commanded for you the full exercise of parental faith ; sanctified for your eternal welfare the deepest emotions of human nature, and spread the majesty of the spiritual world around the minutest concerns of home. To place you in these circumstances, the God of grace has controlled the winds and waves of ages, long before your birth, invested the very beginnings of your existence with the most solemn pledges. He did not give your soul to the charge of the Pagan, the Mahometan, or the Jew ; to the murderous parentage of the infidel, the thoughtless, or the vicious. He hath rocked you in the cradle of faith, and consigned you first to the purity of regenerated love. The first token of affection which saluted your cheek was from sanctified lips, and the first breathings of music which came over your soul were the songs of the Lord. The justice of the claim so tenderly asserted, you will not deny ; the right of God thus early to assert it, is perfectly clear ; and now let me ask, is not his tender mercy thus revealed to your soul, most affecting, most astonishing ! What, did he begin so early to bind you with the cords of love ? Did he so soon build a hedge about you to shelter you from the destroyer ? Did he let your parents into his spiritual kingdom, and then reveal its glories to them that so they might unfold them to you ? Did he require them both to promise, before all his people, that they would do all in their power to prepare you for his presence ? Did he mercifully promise to bless their exertions, and crown their labors with success ? Has he placed upon *them* his mild and spiritual seal, and placed the same seal also upon you ? When your

parents have almost fainted, hath he strengthened ; when they forgot their covenant vows, hath he forgiven ; and when you have resisted their faithful warnings, hath he still waited ; pursued you with the kind invitation ; softened you with the dew of his Spirit, and rebuilt around you again and again the enclosures of his everlasting covenant ? O consecrated youth ! child of the Church ! what bitter enmity to God is that which starts away from these advances of grace ! which rends those silken cords of mercy asunder ! Look up and behold the ineffable grandeur of the Church ; consider that precious connection which makes thee an object of intense interest to those venerable forms, yet detained from those higher glories, that yet they may linger, and weep, and plead with thee. O let them hear thy voice, thou who hast long rebelled against the holy baptismal claim, thou who hast madly striven to erase the name of God from thy forehead : O before that last lingering form shall pass away, let thine heart speak out, "*Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.*"

2. *The consecrated children of the Church must give account at the judgment seat of Christ for the manner in which this interesting connection is treated*

Interesting as this connection is, it can never save you, unless you actually give yourselves to Christ. The great question is now placed distinctly before you. As yet you are debarred from the communion of saints. That very state of mind which calls for your exclusion now, will as certainly demand it in eternity. On account of the tenderness of this connection, your long resistance of God's mercy will appear infatuated depravity. If you have lightly esteemed these noble advantages hitherto, we beseech you to pause and consider in what manner you can finally meet the rejected God of the covenant. How terrible, if turning your back upon the claim of God when presented in mercy,

you shall be compelled to meet it in the frown of insulted justice and avenging retribution. With what plea can the favored son of the Church approach the throne, who has lived and died impenitent? What wilt thou say, O child of many tears! O son of many vows! when he shall punish *thee*? How will that violent breaking away from covenant kindness seem to angels? How will it seem to many a lost soul who never enjoyed such advantages? How will it appear to thine own soul in the scorching meditations of the pit? How will thy restlessness under salutary restraints, thy pride under parental admonitions, thy rashness amongst so many interests that hung trembling around thee, how will all this appear in those terrible scenes of despair? Pause, now, and prepare to meet thy God! When infidelity assaults, think of this connection. It will be time enough for thee to become an infidel when thy case is utterly hopeless. When vice allures, think of this connection. Shall the child of such lofty hopes descend to vicious indulgence? Canst thou, like Esau, like Saul, like Absalom, turn away from love, and mercy, and life? Canst thou bitterly, darkly perish in thy violent rebellion? Wilt thou not from this time cry unto God, "My Father! thou art the guide of my youth." Wilt thou not yield to those choice influences which issue from the consecrated affection of the Church, and are shed around thy soul! which are mingled with all the deepest, strongest, priceless sympathies of the domestic constitution? Repent of all thy sin! *Press in* while the door is open! Give thine eternal all to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Then shall thy name be inscribed on the same bright page, where stand written together thy father's and thy mother's. Then shalt thou, also, be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.

CHAPTER XVI.

Practical reflections. Duties of the Churches. Consecration, with special reference to the ministry. Conclusion.

THE discussions which have engaged our attention suggest a few concluding thoughts respecting the duties of the Church.

1. The ordinance of household consecration should be practically regarded according to its real importance.

IN these times of revolution and of storm, the subject of family religion must be set forth prominently among the great concerns of the Church. While the walls of Zion are built rapidly and high, they must be cemented well and firmly founded. The vital power of household piety is essential to the stability of our times; for, without this, our moral bulwarks will be worthless. This power can be ensured, enhanced, and completely developed, only by the principles of household consecration. In the valuable work of Anderson on the Domestic Constitution, the persons whom he eulogizes, as monuments of its moral power, were *nearly* all—probably *all*—consecrated to God in childhood on the principles of the covenant. This fact is the more impressive, as the selection was made without recognizing the presence of infant dedication. The history of such households as were formed under Cotton Mather, Philip Henry, and Thomas Scott, should be familiar to the Churches. If the Church wishes for more such men as Matthew Henry, she can thus understand in what manner they are to be nurtured.

2. The ministry must give this ordinance a prominent place in their official performances.

The pastors of the Churches will be held responsible for their manner of treating this subject. ¶ That pastor who shall avail himself of the aid which this divinely established institution is able to afford, may gather about him an army of living preachers, who will direct the holy streams of the sanctuary into the open channels of communication with millennial ages. ¶ If the ministry will perform their whole duty in prayer, in preaching, and in family visitation, the Churches will soon be awakened, and the energies of this institution will be fully appreciated.

3. The application of these principles must be extended more thoroughly to servants and other permanent members of the household. Where the connection is transient, ¶ the head of the family is bound to direct, instruct, and guide in the way of life. ¶ So far as their spiritual welfare is concerned, all the transient servants and members of the family have a right to his prayers, watchfulness, and patriarchal interest. He ought never to introduce those into his household who will not honor the institutions of family religion. A servant, whether Catholic or Protestant, should never be allowed habitually to refuse attendance at the family altar. Where the connection is expected to be permanent, as in the adoption of orphans and other children as our own, as in the taking of poor children to remain for years as domestics, they should be consecrated to God on the principles of the covenant. This was the case in the household of Abraham. This was the manner in which the connection between master and servant was guarded, sanctioned, and blessed, under the ancient dispensation. It was a voluntary connection, when not a penal infliction—was formed for mutual benefits, and hallowed by religious vows. If these principles were duly recognized, very different would be

the condition of poor servants in most families, even of the Church. The domestic relations of a free country would be blessings to thousands of those who otherwise would die without instruction. Were the principles of household consecration thus to prevail in the Church, the spirit of slavery would be forever banished from her borders. Even Abraham, holy as he was, could not be entrusted with the mild authority which he exercised over his servants, without being required to give a most solemn pledge for their pious education.

4. Churches should take special care that the meaning of this ordinance be fully explained to her consecrated children. For this purpose, the pastor and officers of the Church should directly and frequently meet with the children. For this purpose, the manner in which this duty is discharged by every parent should be especially investigated. A full apprehension of its real import would exert a most salutary influence on the minds of the children. A consciousness that the children understood it would powerfully affect the parent.

5. The Churches must exercise a peculiar care over their baptized children. The nature of their relationship is such, that they are to be considered as the lambs of the flock. In this ordinance God has erected around them a railing of defence, and has charged his Church not to abandon them to the prowling wolves. So long as they refuse to believe, the Churches must not admit them to the communion, nor in this sense consider them as members. Neither, while they thus remain, is it best, in any sense, to call them members, as this application of the term leads to confusion. Yet the connection which they do sustain requires just such a system of discipline as shall at once most certainly exclude them from the communion until they are really pious, and most powerfully hold them around her

altars so long as any hope of their conversion remains, and most speedily prepare them for a free and full admission.

[Therefore, let convincing evidence of regeneration be demanded, as essential to membership; let them be admonished through their parents, and pursued with entreaties, however far they may wander; let them never be given up, till they are utterly beyond our reach: and finally, let their early conversion be sought, as the legitimate object of faith, and the most obvious design of their consecration.

[When a family of consecrated children generally grow up impenitent, and madly break away from religious restraint, let diligent inquiry be made of their parents respecting their household regulations, and the question, "Is there not a cause?" be urged home upon the conscience.] In this manner a rigorous discipline, of the most tender and appropriate nature, should be maintained, and embrace in its supervision the lambs of the Church.

6. There is one more duty which demands consideration at the present crisis. I refer to infant consecration, *with special reference to the gospel ministry*. There are several reasons why this practice, which now to some extent exists, should be generously encouraged. *The nature of all genuine consecration of infants to God implies a cordial consent, on the part of parents, that God should take any or every son for the sacred office*. There are many parents who have publicly dedicated their sons, and are unwilling that Christ should call them into the ministry, or send them on a mission. They are overcome with the temptations of the world, with the prospect of acquiring the fortunes and the fame which it offers. They are averse, especially, to give the noblest of the flock for his sacred service. Let the Church lift aloud her warning voice against this parental invasion of her Master's claim. Let

her denounce it as sacrilege. Let her read aloud to such parents the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

The nature and privileges of the covenant encourage this special consecration. We have seen that the promise of the covenant is large, extensive, and inviting to the highest exercise of faith. There is ample room for this enlarged desire to glow and burn freely within it. Now, if the believing parents, gazing on their son, feel that nothing would so fill their hearts as to behold him an eminently devoted minister, let them mingle that feeling in the act of consecrating faith, let them breathe with it freely in the very atmosphere of the covenant.

This special consecration is encouraged in the ancient history of the Church.

The consecration of the tribe of Levi to the priesthood, the special consecration of the first-born, the voluntary dedication of Samuel by his mother, and the sublimer dedication of John and of Jesus to their exalted destination, certainly invite the Church of the present age to the frequent exercise of this precious privilege.

Farther encouragement is afforded in the biography of many eminent ministers. The number of such men who have been consecrated to God in childhood, with special reference to the ministry, would surprise any one who had not maturely considered the subject. I need but mention the names of Buchanan, Newton, Hooker, Swartz, Mills, Rice of Virginia, Summerfield, and Thomas Spencer. The early history of Buchanan and Newton must have tried exceedingly the faith which had especially devoted them to the sacred office. What memorable energy must have been lodged in that covenant grasp which lifted Newton from shameful debasement, and recalled the wandering Buchanan from vagrancy and ruin, which made their feet

like hinds' feet, and caused them to walk on the high places of Zion. The Church will forever rejoice in consequence of that parental faith which gave these men to Christ, and to the ministry of his Church, in early childhood. The biographer of Summerfield remarks that, "*previously to the birth of this child, his father has been frequently heard to say, there was nothing that he desired more in early life than that he should have a son, that that son should be a minister of the gospel, and that his name should be called John, and at the time of the birth of this babe his father solemnly dedicated him to the work of the ministry.*" The interesting statement presents before us the very principle which lies at the foundation of all consecration—*faith on the part of the parent, in the gracious promise of God, strong, enlarged, cheerful, and active.* God has thus invited his friends to come, and present their choicest gifts before his altar. The plan of God's grace solicits from the believer the fullest confidence and the noblest aims and efforts. In accordance with these invitations, the believing parent, assured that God will receive him graciously, may come boldly to the throne, especially, when his object is to glorify the Saviour, through the services of his children ; and when he feels that to behold his son a faithful minister of the cross, would be his highest joy, he may know both from the promise, and from the history of the Church, that God will not upbraid him.

This practice commends itself moreover to the *Church* by *its intrinsic propriety.*

Where the parental faith is vigorous, and the consecration is sincere ; where the believer hath gone up into the higher resources of the covenant, and feels himself anointed with its peculiar power, so that he may place his infant son in his Saviour's arms, and rejoice in the light of his countenance ; he is prepared to enter upon the steady prosecution of the purpose which this consecration implies.

That a consecrated son of the Church, who should enter the ministry, through such a process of special and definite training, would be surrounded with unwonted advantages, is abundantly manifest. To the considerations already adduced, we may finally suggest, that the increasing demand for ministers powerfully urge this practice upon the attention of the Churches. On this point it is unnecessary to dwell. The necessities of the world, the straitened operations of the Church, send forth an exceedingly earnest cry for *men*, *good men*, and *many men*. They have appealed to our pious youth, and are appealing still. This appeal must reach, not the youth only, but the parents. It must pass through the outer courts. It must be lodged upon the altar.

The Church of Christ, in this age of moral conflict, needs the inexhaustible resources of this gracious covenant. These supplies, so ample, so glorious, are the purchase of her Saviour's blood ; the gifts of his mediatorial throne ! Let them neither be wasted nor lightly esteemed. The blood must be sprinkled upon the door-posts of Israel, before the Church shall escape from Egypt. ¶ She must write "Holiness to the Lord" upon her children, if she wishes to behold it written upon all things ; ¶ in the spirit of consecrating faith she must stand forth. She must descend upon the vales of the nineteenth century to battle. She must enlarge the place of her tent ; she must extend its cords. She must drive down her stakes amidst the deep principles of truth, and make them strong. Then when she consecrates her offspring to God, she will feel that approaching generations are looking on—then every fresh conquest will be hailed as another pledge of universal triumph—that triumph, thus gained, shall thus be secured ; and the rainbow of the covenant shall be glorious when the morning breaketh, and paradise is regained.

ADDRESS TO PARENTS,

Delivered in the Central Presbyterian Church, Broome-street, New-York, before the New-York City Maternal Association, at their Annual Meeting, March, A. D. 1836.

THE spirit of the age demands the discussion of those great principles which lie at the foundation even of old and venerable institutions. These principles, as they are roused up, take strong hold of the public mind. They force the prevailing maxims of the Church and the world into fiercest conflict. They are impelling the interests of both towards their final junction.

It is delightful in this war of principles, to behold some veteran truth shake itself from the mountainous rubbish of centuries, and break forth to grapple with the moral Hydras of this and of former ages. The soldier of the truth, the champion of the right, the heaven-entitled defender of the faith, must have intimate communion with these permanent principles of all times and places. Only thus can he acquit himself worthily in these present and approaching conflicts. He must look deeper into the elements of human nature, and into the divine provision for their control, than simply to wonder at its earthquakes, or analyze the ruin of its eruptions.

The leaders of the Church and of the State must descend below the surface of public opinion. They must detect those latent energies which lie around the roots of the mountains. The necessity which is thus devolved upon us in our civil and ecclesiastical relations, has intruded itself into the do-

mestic constitution. It is useless, with the hand of imbecility, to wave it back. The Spirit of God, who broodeth over the moral abyss, is summoning these giant principles of truth to abandon their cloisters, to disencumber themselves of unadapted armor, for the purpose of returning defeat for defiance to the champions of sin. He calls to the first principles of religious truth, of civil government, of the domestic constitution. He bids them come forth, and they will come. The purity and enlargement of the Church; the defence of inalienable civil rights; the salvation of domestic interests in the present and in future generations, demand their presence. Every principle of man's highest life, and of God's holy cause, will hear that summons.

Since, therefore, the great truths of the family compact must be roused, it is the duty of every parent to comprehend them, to appreciate them, spiritually, in their bearings, both upon the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of God. Now, if ever, should the Christian parent acquit himself well. Now, if ever, should he understand what power of self-preservation, of commanding, far-reaching influence, God hath wrought into the relations of home. Now, if ever, should he comprehend what God has done in his gracious covenant to apply that power for the renovation of the world. Without such understanding, no parent can be completely furnished for the responsibilities which are rolled upon him. As it is important that the truth of this position should clearly appear, I solicit your consideration of the following sentiment :

That an enlightened and spiritual faith in the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant is essential to the perfection of the parental character.

In contemplating this proposition, we shall consider its application to the father and the mother in their respective relations.

That the faith of which we speak is an essential qualification for the *father*, is manifest,

1. From the fact, that without it no father can fully appreciate the moral grandeur and resources of the domestic constitution.

That this constitution has much to do with the temporal welfare and civil history of man ; much with the formation of character ; much with man's spiritual and highest good, is a fact with which the philanthropist, the philosopher, and the Christian are well acquainted. Should not its resources, therefore, be thoroughly understood by the father, its natural head and responsible agent ? Who would appoint one to manage the movements of a steamboat, who was entirely ignorant of its mighty enginery, or to superintend the concerns of a large manufactory, who knew not the power of its machinery or the value of its productions ? Who would commit an extensive mercantile establishment to one unacquainted with mercantile transactions ? Who would elect a president over this nation, who understood neither the magnitude of her interests, nor the nature of her institutions ?

The importance of a thorough acquaintance, on the part of the father, with the great moral designs and resources of that constitution which he is to administer, will not be questioned. That an intelligent and spiritual faith in the Abrahamic covenant is essential to that thorough acquaintance, will be not merely questioned, but promptly denied. I ask, however, your candid consideration of this one inquiry : *What the provisions of that covenant have to do with the domestic constitution ?*

The God of the Abrahamic covenant was himself the author of the family state. Through that covenant he has revealed the grand original design of the institution. It was the promotion of holiness, through perpetual time, by

means of moral influence. It was, after the fall, the recovery of a train of generations from the progress of eternal degradation. It was to gather, even from the appalling spectacle of the tendency of evil influence on a course of generations, lessons of most impressive admonition for the intercourse of unnumbered worlds in ceaseless ages. It was to improve all its inherent energies for the loftiest purposes of grace.

In the administration of this design, he hath lodged in these household scenes the germs of the mightiest providential revolutions with which the human race has ever been affected.

He rolled over the world the waters of the flood, and swept away every ungodly family ; he called Abraham from the idolatry of Chaldea, and promised him a numerous posterity, and the land of Canaan ; he nourished that posterity even in the land of Ham, even in Egyptian bondage, until they multiplied to millions ; he gathered those millions around the base of Sinai, for the promulgation of his law ; he secured a long succession of sentinels for its safe transmission ; cast up a highway of holy generations for the advent of the Messiah, and spread over the regions of depravity a soil which should absorb for its moisture the descending dews of the Spirit.

The action of the covenant upon the natural ingredients of the family constitution, has extended the chain of gracious designs through all the periods of time, and anointed each link with their living energy. It has prepared from these domestic elements the sublimest monuments of mercy, and by contrasting these with the natural results of family influence, perverted, misemployed, debased, he has revealed, as majestic beacons to all ages, most remarkable specimens of avenging justice. It has poured grandeur over the whole system of household intercourse ; it has connected the least

of its concerns with the concerns of the Church ; it has subordinated its main design to the main design of the Church ; and wherever the grace of that covenant has entered a house, to be greeted with welcome, and there welcomed to abide, it has transcribed the genealogy of its ages into the Lamb's book of life, and preserved the story of its fireside for the instruction of angels and the admiration of worlds.

It has brought down to the father promises full of grace and truth, full of life, inexhaustible wealth, and hereditary glory.

Moreover, it has drawn upon the relations which are woven into its constitution, as upon a canvass, the lineaments of its spiritual kingdom. It has taken the relation between husband and wife to illustrate that between Christ and his Church ; between parent and child, to illustrate that between God and the believer ; between the children themselves, to denominate those between believers ; between master and servant, that between Christ and his ministers. Finally, it has taken the family constitution itself, with all its combined relations, to illustrate the harmony and blessedness of heaven.

The father, who believes and rejoices in the covenant, will, therefore, regard the domestic relations in their spiritual aspect. He will appreciate in his own soul that great promise, I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee. He will plead it before God. It is only by this faith, therefore, that he can so consecrate the household influence as to meet the conditions of the promise. It is only thus that he can realize its largeness and inherit its advantages. Is it not the rule of mercy, *Be it to you according to your faith?*—Must not *faith* lean upon a *promise*? Then, to believe, must not man understand? If the promise is large, must not the faith which meets, honors, inherits it in its fulness, be

also enlarged? Can a man, then, approach the highest attainable blessings for himself, his family, and his posterity without this faith? If not, then can he without it be what a father should be?

Is it of no moment whether there pass down upon his posterity an unfailing river of curses or of blessings? whether the long valley be full of dry bones or of living men?—Faith in the promise, being thus essential to the blessing, is essential both to the performance of the condition and the application of the seal. The consecration of our families is but the public expression of this faith; the public avowal of a fixed purpose to fulfil these conditions; the public sealing over of these immeasurable interests to the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God.

Manifestly, then, an intelligent, spiritual faith in the Abrahamic covenant, in its promises, terms, and seal, is essential to the father, if he would gain for the long succession of immortal minds committed to his care the highest possible blessings, if he would elevate to its highest moral efficacy the domestic constitution.

Is he worthy of a father's station who *would* not do this? Is he qualified for that station who *can* not do it? Can it be done without faith? No! every leaf of grace is thus endorsed by the hand of justice: *Without faith it is impossible to please him.* It is here, as elsewhere. He that will grasp the promise, and rejoice in the blessing, must believe. He who, standing at the head of the family compact, will develop in view of the world those amazing resources of mercy with which the covenant connection hath endowed it, must therefore have this faith clearly in the understanding, glowingly in the heart.

2. The truth of this sentiment will be farther manifest, from the fact, that without this faith the father cannot lay his plans for the regulation of his official conduct on proper

principles. His plans of action should be graduated according to the dignity and resources of the state over which he presides. He should aim to accomplish all which the compact is designed to accomplish. He cannot be expected to rise higher than he aims ; his aim, therefore, must be as high as the occasion warrants. If, then, unless the father shall exercise the faith of which we speak, he will not even apprehend the capacities of the domestic constitution, and will aim to accomplish only what *he* imagines it able to effect : then, of course, his noblest plans of action will fall as far below the mark which he should endeavour to reach, as his views do below the moral grandeur of the relation.

Faith in the covenant, however, will aggrandize all his family arrangements. He will form every household plan on the principle, that the glory of God, in the spiritual welfare of his whole household, shall be its final object. He will plan, therefore, remembering that he and all his belong to Christ ; that every calculation should be such as the living Head himself would sanction ; that his household have been especially claimed by the Saviour himself ; that on him it rests to instruct them in that claim, and plead with them to acknowledge ; that God has certainly promised to add the divine blessing to his labors ; that the Sanctifier himself has promised, assured success ; and that, finally, from his parental faithfulness that same spirit will bring forth a glorious moral influence for ages yet unborn, and will send down his own precious grace to a thousand generations through the channel thus constructed.

Thoughts like these must elevate the plans which they control. His daily domestic habits ; his choice of the business by which he will maintain his children ; of the society to which he will introduce them ; of the schools in which he will educate them ; the personal influence under which he will seek to form their character ; the religious ordinances

from which he will derive their spiritual impressions ; these must all be adopted in conformity with the elevated purpose which his faith in the covenant has produced. Thus will he be prompted to resolve on that course of conduct which shall put the moral resources of the domestic constitution to the test, and prove to the utmost the spiritual wealth of the everlasting covenant.

3. That an intelligent and cordial faith in this covenant is essential to the father, is manifest from the fact, that otherwise the full force of those motives will not be felt under which God designed to form the parental character.

The objects of the family compact are so vast, its interests so precious, its influence when perverted so terrible, that God has in his covenant provided the strongest conceivable motives, in order to secure the co-operation of the father with his own truth and Spirit. For this he gave him the companion of his love, entrusted her temporal comfort to his care, blended her earthly interests with his own, revealed to him the gracious design, addressed him as an intimate friend, promised him persevering grace, provided him with strength to defend his household, and with influence to do them good, commanded him publicly to devote them as really as he had devoted himself, directed him to do it in the same form, required a solemn pledge that he would treat them as the Lord's, assured him of grace to fulfil his pledge ; and, finally, offered him the Spirit's influence, not merely for his immediate offspring, but for his remote descendants.

What motives can we imagine stronger than these ? Combining the consciousness of parental authority with the tenderness of most intimate love, with the joyousness of every bright hope ; blending all a father's with all a Christian's emotions ; calling into the service his sincerest vows, his most public character, and most noble aspirations ;

pledging him personal immortality in heaven, and relative immortality on earth ; and both resulting in multiplied salvation hereafter. This combination of motives, if it prevail through his heart, will lift him to a sublime relationship to all the glories of the Church, and the final developments of the Godhead.

Is it rash now to say, that unless a man believe the covenant from which these motives are drawn, he cannot feel their power? Can *he* rise under their elevating influence who doth not apprehend their existence? By so much as you diminish a father's faith in the covenant, do you therefore detract from the influence under which the God of the covenant designed the character of a father to be moulded, polished, and perfected. Thus again we are brought to the conclusion, most directly, that this covenant faith is an essential qualification for every father.

4. This conclusion is substantiated by the manner in which this faith leads him up among the precious promises and unlocks to him their inexhaustible treasures.

The principle by which the believer inherits the object of his faith has been already stated. It must respect the peculiar promise of this covenant, in order to obtain its peculiar blessing. His faith will, in its different degrees, enable him to ford the stream, according as the waters rise to the ankles, or successively to the breast ; will enable him to walk on their current when they cannot be passed over. The strength of faith shall produce depth of study ; and the well-studied promise will react upon the faith, adding strength to strength, and giving grace for grace. How valuable then to the father is this privilege of believing ! Since he is thus appointed the spiritual guardian of his family, placed in most responsible circumstances, how reasonable the expectation, how precious the knowledge, that

ample provision is made for all his wants and for every conflict.

Assured of this, let him come boldly to the Spirit's throne. Let him study the scope and bearings of this covenant ; the illustrious instances of its might, which the history of divine grace unfolds ; and the highest of its heavenly places to which the Church militant may aspire. In the lofty honors of the twelve tribes, in the advent of the Messiah, in the prosperity of the gospel among the Gentiles, in the arm of mercy, which, outstretched still—notwithstanding eighteen hundred years of unbelief—even now holds every wandering Jewish father, as the ancestor of a race of saints ; in the utterance of prophecy, which announces restoration for the Jew, and enhanced glory of adoption for the Gentile ; he may read the *deep*—may feast on the *gracious*—things of God. Such studious faith will bring the promise home to his own heart, as a thing whereof to glory. It will teach, that even for him there is no parental good inaccessible to his aspiring toil ; that he can neither aim too high, trust too far, nor hope too much, if he will aim, and trust, and hope as the covenant guides him.

His emotions will become stronger, richer, mellow, as he follows the meandering of its waters, in the domestic scenery which the hand of Providence hath created within his own observation. Although few indeed are the fathers that have risen to the highest awards of faith, yet there are those whose very names are brightened by the unction of the blessing so long abiding. The name of Edwards, a very mantle for the saints ; of Dwight, the inheritor of its holy radiance ; of Mather, and Scott, and Henry, and hundreds of others well known in the public records of Zion ; of multitudes more, well known in the deep, but more obscure records of the heart, might be adduced as illustrations of its

hallowed sway. It is mentioned in one book as marvellous, that the children of a man, named above, can reckon seven generations of a pious ancestry. Yet why should this seem marvellous? It does *not* to the enlarged heart of covenant faith: a careful examination of household records around us would even present many cases *not less*, nay, *very many*, that are *more* illustrious. Many indeed are the fathers, who, by the strong wrestlings of patriarchal faith, have left the power of their example—the accumulating interest of their own rich grace, as a glorious legacy for successive generations.

But “*thou shalt see greater things than these.*” The covenant promise was made by him who predestinated the millennium. It was adapted, therefore, to the largeness of millennial faith; its structure was capacious, that so it might contain all the interests which the earlier fathers of those bright ages may roll into it. As that blessed era approaches, the vision of the Church will be enlarged, to read, and measure, and enjoy the covenant prospects. The ancestry, not remote, of those millennial fathers, is now forming. How shall the fathers now on the stage acquit themselves honorably towards the coming generations, unless they now take hold of the covenant?

It is faith alone which annihilates the distance of many generations. Faith places the covenant home by the very gate of heaven. It enables the father, who has well compared spiritual promises with spiritual providences, forming his character under these views, and plans, and motives, to summon even here, and daily, descending thousands, in the assuring visions of promise, around the domestic altar.—He may say, as if in their realized presence, *Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me.*

We shall now proceed to prove,

2. That an enlightened and spiritual faith in the Abra-

hamic covenant, is essential to the perfection of the *maternal* character. The truth of this sentiment, appears,

1. From the consideration, that the mother is entrusted with the charge of human nature in its earliest conditions.

The introduction of a new immortal to scenes of moral accountability—to a series of moral feelings and deeds which will never end, is the prerogative of the mother. It is her voice, that, morning by morning, wakens its softest impressions. It is her soul of thought, and tenderness, and fire, which first seeks out the hidden sources of moral life, and calls up the harmonious energies of existence.

She can hear the inward chiming of the affections when others cannot. She fashions its earliest smile, and dries up its earliest tear. She daily governs, originates, diversifies its earliest plans. She sings the cradle hymn. From her lips the child first gains, and best gains, his impressions of God, and Christ, and duty, of happiness and heaven. From her lips he catches his first idea of the chief end of man—the great, the marvellous idea of eternity.

It is then of vast moment that the heart of the mother should be well qualified for this ministry. She should clearly perceive the worth of the human spirit, its relations to God and its connections with the plan of redeeming grace, with the final disclosures of the triune, self-revealing God. She should understand correctly, and practically, the design of God in trusting such an agent for purposes of moral formation in her hands. She hath need to be adequately apprised how fearful are the elements of depravity and the exposures of an immortal nature. All this she needs in order to comprehend the full scope of that responsibility under which she is commissioned to act. This she will gain only by a prayerful study of the grand principles and design of the covenant. Thus she will perceive how the covenant of redemption mingles with the covenant of

grace, and how they both make the Abrahamic covenant the reservoir for the main body of their waters. Thus she can see why the God of the covenant hath set all the strength of a mother's love about the moral beginnings of the infant mind. Thus will she feel the necessity which is laid upon her of rousing to her predestined work all the energies of her nature. Thus she will understand why it is that when by the very strength of her natural affection, she might be tempted to idolatry, God has written in front of her, on the brow of her child, This is mine. Why it is, that just when she would be tempted to remissness, he has, in the ordinance which presents his claim, demanded her pledge? Why it is that this intense love, thus sanctified for glorious purposes, should prompt her to ply all the energies of a mother's ingenuity for the spiritual welfare of the child. Thus she will comprehend why the son of her sorrows should be the son of her vows; why that same wisdom which wrought into her being the elements of insuppressible love, wrought also amidst the scenes of its birth the ingredients of the primeval curse. It was, that all might know, and that she might feel, most of all, the overwhelming value of the soul, and the overwhelming grandeur of that relation on which its character and interest are suspended.

I ask, now, if the mother can demonstrate her adequacy to the mother's work, without a glowing faith in these covenant truths? Must she not understand, believe, and feel them, in order to walk in the full light, and have the candle of the Lord shine with all its own lustre about her tabernacle?

2. The faith of which we speak is essential to the mother, because her province is peculiarly with the heart.

To educate the intellect is not peculiarly hers, except in early years. To educate the heart, is peculiarly hers,

always. The earliest affection in the bosom of an infant, which seems like moral affection, is love to the mother.—The young being soon begins to feel that relations exist between him and the ever present object from which his comforts come, in whose smile he reads delight, and in whose frown he feels control. Hence, probably, the earliest feelings of remorse of which children are usually conscious, arise from having grieved a mother, from having violated those relations which they most clearly perceive and most keenly feel. The happiness of the human spirit, through its future moral history, depends on the bestowment of its affections. The mother is providentially placed where she receives the first outgoings of affection. To that mother's caress, the first perceptible and most attenuated cords of moral agency are attuned, and the first impulses which are to pass down the everlasting current of affection issue from it.

If to these considerations we add the intense energy of the maternal love, we shall at once perceive that the mother has an access to the heart, which, if subservient to evil purposes, is truly terrific, and if consecrated to good, is benevolently majestic. Since, therefore, such peculiar power is in her hands; since the pathway to the young heart is so familiar to her, that even when the rubbish of age hath covered it, and the crimes of life encrusted it, she *best* and often alone can find it; how important that her affections should be spiritualized; that their first emanations should be pure, and their earliest impulses should be holy. How important that the great sun of truth should look in upon them and form them into a heart of spiritual vigor,—into a fountain of spiritual life.

Yet what views of truth can so lift up the heart as those which the covenant gives. What amazing objects of concern it unveils to the vision of faith. What intense power of

motives it brings to bear precisely on the point where the mother's love and the child's love are linked together. It takes the ardent aspirations of the soul, and treasures them as blessings for the child. It transforms whatever there is sensual, trifling, or vain, in the natural sympathies of the relation, into the pure, the elevated, the spiritual. It claims all for God, and having connected the welfare of the child with the admission of the claim, urges the principles of entire consecration deep to the heart, forming that heart into correspondence with holiest truth, and reflecting the light thus formed upon the open heart of the child. The maternal affection, thus ennobled, will become the channel of sanctification and spiritual elevation to all other affections, and will shine most radiant in the family constellation.

It is by the affections that men are swayed, characterized and impelled, classed into families, beset with companionships, and combined in business. It is by the affections that they are deceived, brutalized, and destroyed; that they are converted, sanctified, and glorified; that they are maddened for deeds of shame; that they are inspired for actions of self-denying virtue and benevolent daring.

The covenant, therefore, placing the great claim of God over all man's affection, writes that claim over the first throbbings of the infant brow, infuses it into the first burning glance or gaze which reveals the mother's heart to the heart of the child, and sheds abroad the mellowing agency of the Spirit only on the affections.

How, then, shall the Christian mother advance to the solemn business of living, breathing, moving amidst a circle of young, susceptible, and glowing hearts, who hath not gained that celestial anointing which deep communion with the spirit of the covenant alone can give? That mother

who hath washed the feet of covenant mercy with her tears, who hath revealed her most enshrined love to its heart-searching inquiries after idolatrous thoughts, who hath devoted her strongest passions and her loftiest energy to its grand, its compassionate, its glorious purposes, she will feel that the promise of the Spirit which the covenant gives, is more precious than all other precious things ; that the vital presence of the Spirit is so essential to her fondest hopes, that without it she would not dare to leave the print of a mother's footsteps along the pathway of domestic affection.

3. This faith in the household covenant is essential to the mother, because it unfolds the vast importance of that sphere of action which God has assigned to woman.

Ordinarily, she is not called to scenes where much physical strength is requisite, or much public notoriety is incurred. She is not expected to appear amidst the bustle of the exchange, amidst the strife of public affairs, or the severe labors of the shop, or the farm. She is not expected to occupy the sacred desk or the hall of legislation ; to plead at the bar, or to sit on the throne ; to contend for the prize of medical skill or of martial glory. Had she been destined for this sphere, God would have endowed her with the requisite physical might and intellectual hardihood. There have been emergencies, however, when public or private necessity has constrained even woman to stand forth as the queen of nations and the prophetess of God.

We do not stay to relate how God hath taught her discretion, and used her wisdom to defeat the wise, and her feebleness to overcome the strong. But her sphere, her own peculiar sphere, is wide and powerful, yet it is diverse from all this, for it lies nearest the spiritual world. God has stationed her there, that she may grasp the young

spirit on its first entrance upon this stormy life, and stamp first and deeply upon the early heart just impressions of the spiritual world.

By this means, *she* may prepare even the son for all future scenes of moral conflict. She must remember that her beloved boy is to go where she may not go, and that where the mother herself is not seen, she will be known through her son, and that if his name goes down to posterity, posterity will inquire after hers; they will inquire, not for her name only, but for her character; they will look in upon her nursery; they will study the peculiarities of her temper; they will connect them with the shame or glory of her son.

The mothers of Samuel, of David, and of John the Baptist, of Jesus Christ himself, and of Timothy, are known as widely as their sons. The mothers of Wesley, and Edwards, of Dwight, and Doddridge, and a host of others, share in the holy eminence of these men of God. The mothers of many a tyrant, or profligate writer, or miserable infidel, share in another eminence, the eminence of authority abused and of genius morally degraded. Faithful biography, that tells these stories of the dead to us, will tell the same stories to those who shall come after us. She will deal with the maternal character of this generation as she has with that of the past. In the statuary which she chisels out, she will fold it as the everlasting drapery of the figure; for the statue and its drapery are chiselled from the same material.

Should the Christian mother consecrate her son to some high, patriotic, philanthropic, and evangelical labor and office, she can do much towards giving the first direction; if she lays hold of the covenant, she can realize the aspirations of her fondest wishes; if she will study deeply into the import, the history, and the privileges of household con-

segregation, though she never will proudly pray like the mother of Zebedee's children, she may silently, but effectually pray like the mother of Samuel. She will know how in the sweet, quiet peace of covenant faith, to "sit at the feet of Jesus," and will "ponder these things in her heart" over her children, till she can hear "their angels" whisper, "She hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her."

There is another peculiarity in woman's sphere, which illustrates the value of faith in the covenant. She is especially charged with the education of the daughter. When her son has gone forth amidst the conflicts of life, the daughter is still with her. That daughter should never be obliged to apply to novels for the knowledge of human nature, nor to hired instructors for the knowledge of manners, nor to the heartlessness of fashionable life for ideas of propriety. Let the intelligent, watchful, affectionate mother, with the Bible in her hand; with the lessons of experience on her lips; and the impulses of genuine delicacy in her heart: let her point to the sources of healthful knowledge, and weave into her daily habits the elements of attractive manners. Let her apply all the spirituality of the covenant to that daughter's affections. Let her gentle persuasion remove the vanity, the love of display, the undue curiosity whenever exhibited.

The faithful mother will not seek to annihilate her daughter's vivacity, but to engage it for delightful services of the Saviour; not to chill the warm affections of the mind, but to enlist them in whatever is pure, and lovely, and of good report. She will impress the mind of the daughter with the vast importance of the right use of influence; explain to her the nature of that influence which she will exert; the exposures to which her powers of exciting interest will lead

her ; and point her to those grand and elevating purposes which the author of all her powers commands her to cherish.

She, who as a mother sits queen amongst a circle of daughters, has a most responsible post ; the destinies of coming generations are domesticated about the fireside ; the interests of unborn ages lie concealed in their toys. It is the mother's province to revere those destinies, and to guard these interests well. What motives can persuade the mother to do this so effectually as those drawn from the bosom of the everlasting covenant ? What other truths stamp the domestic influences with such living grandeur ? What other sun pours around that hearth such radiance of glory ? What other views shed such imperial beauty on the future history of a consecrated and pious daughter ?

There is another item which must not be forgotten. It is peculiarly in her power to instruct all her children on the subject of forming alliances for life. These instructions should be early bestowed, and deeply impressed. Let her remember what Rebecca did for Jacob. Let her remember what Esau did to grieve Isaac and Rebecca. Let her guard her young group against all the devices of Satan : instruct them into the nature of the marriage covenant, showing them what amazing interests it involves, and what august connections it originates with the final judgment. Yet to do thus she must understand the principles of the covenant. She must know how that covenant pours its blessings on the godly household ; how it admonishes, in all past history of the Church, the believing son never to introduce an enemy of God, as the head of his family ; the believing daughter never to put all her earthly interests under the protection of the ungodly, Let her remember the story of the flood ; of heart-broken Lot ; of wandering Asa,

of miserable Solomon : let her learn the story of her own sex in all ages, when the power has been in the hands of the unbeliever.

Be assured, it requires strong faith in the covenant of God, for a mother, as the mother is often placed, to perform all her duty here, and so to bear the case before the throne, that all her own children shall be prepared to profit by these warnings, by being themselves early converted. This is a consummation which God does often vouchsafe to those parents who walk in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless. This is a result which the covenant has provided for those in whose hearts its appropriate faith does not fail, and its appropriate purpose never wavers.

May we not, in view of the peculiar sphere assigned to the mother, again appeal to that covenant whose provisions are adequate to all the necessities of her state, and to all the approaches of a correspondent faith. What mother would venture into that sphere without taking hold of the covenant ?

4. This faith is essential to the mother, on account of the peculiar liabilities of her condition.

It is oftener the lot of the Christian mother to be associated with an impenitent husband, than of a Christian father with an impenitent wife. In some circumstances this connection greatly embarrasses her in the discharge of family duty. It may, therefore, generally and especially be said of a Christian woman, that she needs all the vigilance, and resolution, and encouragement, which the full persuasion of covenant promises can give her. She needs it, in order that, in the hour of temptation, she may cast all her care upon one that is mighty : that, when trials thicken, she may gather her loved ones under its wings : that, when strength and heart faileth, she may renew them both, by fresh application to

her abiding place, under the shadow of the Almighty. The changes of home come to her with a louder call upon her vigor, and create a keener necessity of superhuman aid.

Suppose her widowed, and surrounded with a group of unconverted sons. The father's watchful eye and guardian hand no more restrain them. They are in the recklessness of unmanageable youth, and her voice, though stronger in virtuous persuasion than another's, yet needs to be sustained by the sterner tones of the father. They are silent in death. O then, surely, does the maternal heart need to cling closer than ever to the Saviour, and lean where the beloved disciple leaned, and ask her questions, with all the confidence of a sustained and quiet spirit. See yonder lonely widow ! She has a son turbulent and unthankful ; and though young, far on the road to hell. Every night he resorts to the theatre, spending his earnings vilely ; while she, with difficulty living, has no power to control him. He has no respect for himself or for her. There are many such widows in Israel ; and what but a spiritual faith in the everlasting covenant can furnish full consolation to a heart so deeply wounded.

Suppose that she is called, not thus to break her heart over an undutiful son, but herself to bid the beloved circle of her children farewell ; leaving them, perhaps, in the care of an impenitent, a dissipated, or a skeptical father. Then, with what energy of faith does she need to embrace the covenant, if she would say, " Now lettest thine handmaid depart in peace, for mine eyes shall see thy salvation." There is nothing beside this, which can move a Christian mother in such a case, so that she may rise up to the full dignity of her spiritual relations.

Yet, in order to this, in both the cases supposed, there is a long and previous action of this faith required. It is not a kind of faith which is energetic, because roused in

some terrible crisis, but that which, by the uniform tenor of its efficacy, shall rather prevent the necessity itself; or, when it comes, meet it with the calmness of conscious strength, and triumph without extraordinary exertion. Happy indeed is that mother who so wisely and constantly labors for the immediate conversion of her children, that no evil day shall take her unawares. For this she needs the utmost fulness of the promise; she must have this faith, of which we speak, to herself and before God. She cannot in those cases rise to all a mother's moral greatness without it.

Suppose her affected by another change. She is about to behold her sons pass out from her immediate control. They are to enter the public school, to press forward in the bustle and activities of business, to go forth amidst the spirits of this world, amidst its fascinations and perils. Her eye cannot be upon them, but her heart throbs with painful emotions. Then, again, she even fainteth, to rest herself, like the sparrow, by the altars of her God. She must strengthen herself for the watchings of faith, by feasting upon the truths of that perpetual covenant. It will be well for her then if she can say, "Lord, thou knowest I have consecrated them to thee; that from day to day I have borne them on my heart; that I have held fast mine integrity before them; I have trusted in thy word." It should be the resolve of every mother so to live, that when a son of hers passes out from her presence, amidst spiritually perilous scenes, he may go forth an heir of the personal promise of unchanging grace. Not till the evidence of this is seen should her heart give over.

The mother of Augustine did right when she implored the bishop to exert himself to save her son, until he impatiently exclaimed, "Begone, woman! the son of such prayers and tears can never be lost!" She had reason for

this anxiety, and it was this very union of solicitude with importuning faith, which constrained her to plead, and which brought the blessing.

That mother did right who, when her son would go to the public ball, told him that while he was there she should spend the whole time in prayer for his soul. It was the earnest action of sincere faith ; and God, who looks at the heart, honored it as such, in manifesting his converting grace amidst the scenes of mirth, and in returning to her a penitent son.

When the maternal soul, under the impulse of such determined faith, can take fast hold of the promise, there is a sublime energy in its movements on moral subjects, analogous to that which it oftentimes exhibits when roused by the call of temporal necessity, or of pressing danger. Often does the historic page cause our hearts to thrill with tales of lofty daring, and more than masculine prowess, to which the roused soul of woman hath risen in the pressure of some terrible crisis. These instances are not confined to that portion of mankind who win the renown of history. They are constantly occurring in the ordinary ranks of life. A poor woman, whose little son had fallen into a deep well, which was considered very difficult of descent, even for the most experienced foot, saw him rise to the surface of the water, and felt that he must be saved *then* or *never*. Regardless of life, of danger, of all things but her child, she went down to the water cautiously—rapidly—caught her child—and up the perilous foot-holds of the well, bearing him in her arms, she ascended with safety and in triumph. How she did this she knew not ; it was the rapid and wondrous exertion of a human spirit when all its marvellous capacities were concentrated to one point, and borne forth into a sublimity of execution surpassing its own comprehension in successive and calmer moments.

There are perils of a moral nature, when the mother's heart must be awakened to analogous action, or in the deep pit of sin the child will be lost. Thanks be to God, that in his gracious covenant he has made adequate provision for the loftiest movements of parental faith. The soul which will trust and obey that covenant promise may venture—how far? he hath not said—he hath appointed no bounds—but this he hath said, “*When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!*” Thousands of mothers, in all ages, have tried these promises, and have never found them to fail; they trusted in the everlasting covenant, and sung of its glory. The Elizabeths and Marys of other days have exchanged their glad salutation, and mutually exclaimed, “*Blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.*”

The considerations on which we have dwelt in this address, have sustained, we trust, the main sentiment which it presents, *an intelligent and spiritual faith in the Abrahamic covenant essential to the perfection of the parental character.*

If this sentiment is *true*, it ought to be *felt*.

It should be felt by all those parents who treat the consecration of children as chiefly a thing of fashion and display. It is painfully true that many parents who present their children for baptism, seem to be influenced by no higher considerations. The beauty of the child, the elegance of its dress, the public annunciation of its name, the compliance with ecclesiastical fashion, occupy the thoughts, first, midst, and always. These motives might influence an infidel to present his child, and do influence many nominal Chris-

tians. Were the principles of the covenant fully wrought into the parental mind and heart, they would forbid such unhallowed profanation ; they would banish such ridiculous and unworthy motives ; they would consume them by the intense flame of consecrating faith.

It should be felt by all those parents who are influenced to observe it by feelings of superstition. There are many parents who, if a child is dangerously sick, will be anxious to have it baptized, and yet never think of assuming the obligations which this ordinance enforces. If the minister will baptize it, they think that all is well. They do not pretend to exercise any faith themselves, nor feel disposed to perform, in any respect, the conditions of the covenant. They have no spiritual apprehension of the Abrahamic promise. Were the promise and terms of that covenant fully before them, they would not dare to have the sacred seal affixed while they had no penitence or faith themselves. Were this subject to be presented, with all its claims, to parents in such a state of mind, it might produce very pungent convictions of sin, and lead them to tremble under the charge of withholding their own soul from the God to whom they in infancy were devoted, and of voluntarily placing an insuperable obstacle in the way of their children's consecration. Then it would no more seem like a superstitious rite, but it would speak in their heart like the voice of God pleading in tones of mercy and of admonition, both for them and theirs.

It is essentially important that parents in our large cities should feel the sentiment of this address.

You know the peculiar temptations of the city. You mourn and tremble when you consider the exposures of your beloved children. You often feel as if, like Lot, you must gather all the members of your household together, and make haste away. All around us is a vast wilderness of mind, dark, apostate, ruined. Deadly serpents are coiled ;

poisonous waters stagnate ; beasts of prey devour, in these moral marshes. O, if any where the strength, authority, and tenderness of the parental character should be fully developed, it is needful *here* and *now*. If any where the father should exert all a father's rights, and perform all a father's duty, and put the glowing presence of all a father's watchfulness about every domestic interest, it is *here*. If ever, or any where, the maternal character should shed its most hallowed purity around the infant heart, should mingle its most transmuting energy among the follies of childhood, should extend its strongest, most constraining influence over the passions of youth, it is *here*. Look around the walls of Zion. See the vast throng of her consecrated yet impenitent youth suspended over the bottomless gulf. Cords of the sanctuary hold them. Restraints of Providence hold them. There is an arm put forth ; it grasps with the energy of maternal love the cords of the covenant ; it is beautiful and slender ; but God hath made it strong.—Let the arm of the father be stretched forth by its side. Let the strong grasp of combined and perpetual parental character take hold of those covenant cords, and through them take hold of those unwavering interests to which God hath fastened them.

It should be felt throughout the Church of God, because it will fire his people with holy zeal to extend the benefits of the covenant to all the families of the earth.

Extend it through this city. Let this faith in the covenant seek the immediate conversion of the heads of families among us. Gain every Christian, and father, and mother, into the practical belief of these truths. Enlist them into full confidence in the covenant promise, and sincere performance of the covenant pledge. Appeal to every impenitent father and mother. Hold up this covenant ! Cry aloud, “*Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul*

shall live : and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Tell them what the sure mercies are. Repeat the great Abrahamic promise ; point to the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God. Make every father and mother the full, explicit, glorious proposal, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" Do not forget the last three words. Let your hearts thrill under the overwhelming interests which they include. Press them, in all their original emphasis, on the impenitent heart. Give them the additional emphasis which the tremendous circumstances of a city population require. Rest not—give Him no rest—ye that sigh for the abominations that are done in our midst—until the Angel of Israel shall rejoice over one great city ; through whose long crowded streets, on every door-post, shall shine, *The blood of the covenant.*

Remember the many consecrated children which have come away from the care of Churches in our country, from the guardianship of pious homes, from the watchfulness of covenant-trusting parents, to enter into the business, to conquer or eternally die, amidst the temptations of the city. The blood of many such hath already stained our streets. The young budding plants of covenant cultivation have withered rapidly and mournfully, under the moral influence which here assailed them. Search out the early history of the young, whom you behold, from week to week, approaching this vortex. Receive them to your compassion, your friendship, your watchfulness, your Christian privileges, and your promise-pleading prayer. The cords of consecration in the city must be joined with those of the country. As the worldly business, intercourse, and influences of both amalgamate, so must the prayers, the endeavors, the strong, enduring faith of the Church, throughout our cities and our towns, be speedily united. Pledge must

extend to pledge ; promise woven in with promise ; prayer responded in associate prayer, until the presence of covenant principles shall be, upon our intermingling nation, universal, like the air we breathe ; and communicative, as our country's waters.

We said that this faith would fire the people of God with holy zeal, to extend the covenant blessings to all the families of the earth. The Christian who rejoices in the experience of the promise, in his own household, will gaze with pain on the spiritual desolation which reigns in the house of the wicked. The motives drawn from this gracious constitution of mercy are calculated to raise all the sensibility of the soul. They will present before him the unevangelized portions of mankind, with all their complicated woes, weighed down under the pressure of hereditary and debasing superstition. The burden of falsehood and shame is going down with unbroken force upon successive generations. Like the wheels of Juggernaut, it crushes where it rolls. He reads in the precious book, that the ample provisions of grace are designed for *them* as well as *him*. Will he not feel his whole soul stirred within him to carry these provisions to them, to tell them of their value, to urge them upon their acceptance ; beseeching them, with strong crying and tears, not to receive the grace of God in vain. This subject has not yet been brought to bear on the cause of the world's conversion, as it will be. Some few noble spirits, however, have been prompted by its elevating impulse. Having experienced the power of the covenant in their own souls, they have gone forth among the heathen, impelled by its motives, cheered by its promises, and governed by its principles.

O'er pagan realms, long seal'd in fearful sleep,
O why did Mills and toil-worn Martin weep ?

They heard and felt, as we should feel, the cry
Of hopeless millions, as it rose on high :
Heard the pale infant's faint, expiring scream ;
Saw the wild mother in her frenzied dream
Of coming joy, self-martyr'd, clasp the stake,
Hug the cold corpse, and perish for his sake !
For *them* these youths life's deepest sorrows bore,
And long'd, in death, to make one struggle more :
For them this last warm, dying prayer they gave,
" O God, redeem ! O God, look down and save ! "

O, could the Churches of Jesus Christ once be thoroughly roused to comprehend the bearings of this faith on the world's conversion ! could they first consecrate their offspring to this great work ! could they realize the overwhelming importance of shedding these truths amongst poor heathen families ; of breaking away the habits of many ages ; of setting a course of generations into the channel of the covenant in every pagan land, and in all lands, they would then begin to comprehend what is the height, and breadth, and length, and depth of that promise, *In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed !*

THE PRAYER OF HABAKKUK, OR CONSOLATIONS OF THE COVENANT.

THE attentive student of the third chapter of Habakkuk, cannot fail to perceive in its whole train of thought a living faith in the Abrahamic covenant. Having just been called to utter the most fearful divine denunciations against Israel, and oppressed with the certainty of their long Babylonian captivity, he seems to have taken up his harp, and, as the ancient wonders which a covenant-keeping God had wrought for the Church rushed to mind, his soul was borne upward from the deepest depression to the strongest confidence, and even to adoring rapture. Believing that it is a precious specimen of the sustaining power of covenant-faith, amidst severest trials, I have thought that a paraphrase, which should somewhat elucidate its obscurer phrases, might be at once animating and instructive to every believer in the covenant. The reader will find it profitable to spread the prophecy before him, and compare its individual verses, with those of the paraphrase, according to their respective numbers.

1.

A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, upon Shigionoth.

2.

O Lord, I heard, and as thy speech distill'd,
My listening soul with thoughts of terror thrill'd ;
Though Israel's harp, unhonor'd and unstrung,
Shall long o'er Babel's willow'd streams be hung,
Yet, when thy wrath our tribes shall captive lead,
'Mid those dark years let mercy intercede ;
Make known thy power, that thy flock may thrive ;
Amidst those years, O Lord, thy work revive !

3.

From Paran's wilds, and Edom's rocky shore,
 Where the proud surges of the Red Sea roar,
 Where Sinai, based on Teman's granite breast,
 Rears to the sky his thunder-blasted crest,
 Where Horeb towers untrod by mortal man,
 The holy God his glorious march began ;
 On Sinai's brow he fix'd his burning throne :
 Earth teem'd with praise, and heaven with glory shone !

4, 5.

What robes of splendor o'er that scene were cast,
 The lightning's flash, the trump's tremendous blast,
 The trembling tribes that heard the voice of God,
 The quaking mount, for there Jehovah trod,
 And there his fiery law engraved on stone,
 Treasured the might of Israel's holy One.
 There was the ark of God to Jacob given,
 There round their camp was shed the light of heaven,
 Then quail'd each foe, death struck before his ire,
 Whose van was pestilence, whose rear was fire !

6.

He stood ; and measured for that wond'rous host,
 Canaan, thy realms ! against him who can boast !
 Onward they march'd, that promise-shielded flock,
 While to their deep foundations wildly rock
 Earth's everlasting mountains ! who can stay
 The march of God ! eternal is his way !

7.

When his keen sword o'er wolfish Amalek gleam'd,
 When Heshbon fell, when Bashan's life-blood stream'd,
 I saw surrounding realms and tyrants quail,
 Saw Ethiopia shake ; his tents were frail :
 Midian's light curtains quiver'd as they past,
 And wild Arabia hark'd at every blast !

8, 9, 10.

Nature's free elements, to form their path,
 Became their slaves. Jehovah ! was thy wrath

Against that rifted sea, or Jordan's flood,
 Or Egypt's fertile waters turn'd to blood?
 And wast thou angry with the rivers? No;
 The time predestined came: thy uncased bow
 Wrought for thy people. 'Twas salvation gave
 Egypt to blood, and Pharaoh to the wave!
 'Twas for thy word, with oaths unchanging seal'd,
 The floods of earth were cleft; the mountains reel'd.
 For this the overflowing of the stream pass'd by,
 And the deep lifted up his voice and hands on high.

11.

Earth bow'd, but not alone. Heaven knows thy will,
 Through all his orbs: the sun and moon stood still
 In their eternal mansions, or rolled on;
 Hid their bright beams, or else refulgent shone,
 To fill thy saints with joy, thy foes with fear,
 Like thine own arrows, and thy glittering spear!

12, 13, 14, 15.

Then sail'd thine ark, O God, in Canaan's gore:
 Her tribes the sheaves, her land the threshing floor!
 Tremendous "march" beneath thine angry tread:
 Those realms of crime, like groaning Egypt, bled
 When from her iron grasp thy son was saved,
 When thine own rod, by hands anointed waved,
 Its withering curse o'er cot and palace flung;
 Till the death-wail of every household rung,
 Till the long shriek of agony had burst
 Through all his villages: then when the accursed,
 Steel-hearted monarch, like a whirlwind, rush'd
 Fierce on thy feeble saints, his power was crush'd,
 Thou ledst thy horses through the dark Red Sea,
 That monarch perish'd, and thy flock was free!

16.

When first, O God, thy fearful warning came
 Of Israel's long captivity and shame,
 Terror ran through my frame; my faltering lip
 Quiver'd to tell how holy blood must drip
 From all Judea's altars—every bone
 Drank the cantation, till with deepest groan

My trembling, fainting soul essay'd to pray
For strength and rest in that avenging day,
When proud Chaldea shall thy flock invade,
And all his cruel troops through Zion's blood shall wade.

17, 18, 19.

But thou art God ! thy hand will still restrain ;
Those ancient wonders were not wrought in vain ;
Strong is thy covenant ! though thy judgments come,
Firm are my hopes, and all my murmurings dumb.
Although the fig-tree shall no blossom wear,
And green, luxuriant vines no fruit shall bear ;
Though each bright olive grove in mockery shine,
Though every field in withering want shall pine,
Though all our flocks shall perish from the fold,
And not a stall its wonted herd shall hold,
Still shall Jehovah's praise my tongue employ,
And God, my Saviour, fill my soul with joy.
Jehovah ! covenant God ! my strength, my rock,
'Mid dangerous paths my soul shall safely walk :
Climb, like the hind, still guarded by thy rod,
And shout exulting on the hills of God !

THE ALTAR OF CONSECRATION.

God of salvation, we rear thee this altar !
Awake ! and upon it thy glory record ;
Here may the faith of thy saints never falter
While they their dear children devote to the Lord.

Joy to the parent ! thy Saviour will shield thee,
And cause thee to rest with thy lambs in his fold ;
Here shall the Spirit that wash'd thee and seal'd thee,
His seal on thy loved ones in mercy behold.

Altar of Jesus, what thousands surround thee,
What ages of glory upon thee shall rest ;
True to thy trust have the saints ever found thee ;
The home that hath own'd thee hath ever been blest.

Firm as of old, thou shalt not be demolish'd
Till nature's great temple retains not a stone ;
Till, built of the stones which his Spirit hath polish'd,
God's temple shall shine 'midst the blaze of his throne !

THE CONSECRATION.

God of the cross, this *heart* is thine !
Thou knowest that closet's secret shrine ;
Where, when no eye but thine could see,
I wept and gave it all to thee.
Sweet hour of mercy ! sacred spot !
And shall that closet be forgot ?
Its pardoning smile, its secret shrine ?
Never while beats this heart of mine.

God of the cross, this *life* is thine !
Thou knowest that temple's glorious shrine,
Where, e'en while men and angels bow'd,
Thy suppliant child sincerely vow'd,
And shall that altar be forgot ?
Never, in deed, or word, or thought ;
But oft before that glorious shrine
Renew'd shall be that vow of mine.

Blest was the hour, and sweet the vow,
Serenely on this throbbing brow
Fell the pure water-emblem true,
Of Saviour's blood and Spirit's dew—
Pledge that through all this dangerous race
Mine, mine shall be thy conquering grace—
Pledge that through sin and passion's strife,
Thine, thine shall be my heart and life.

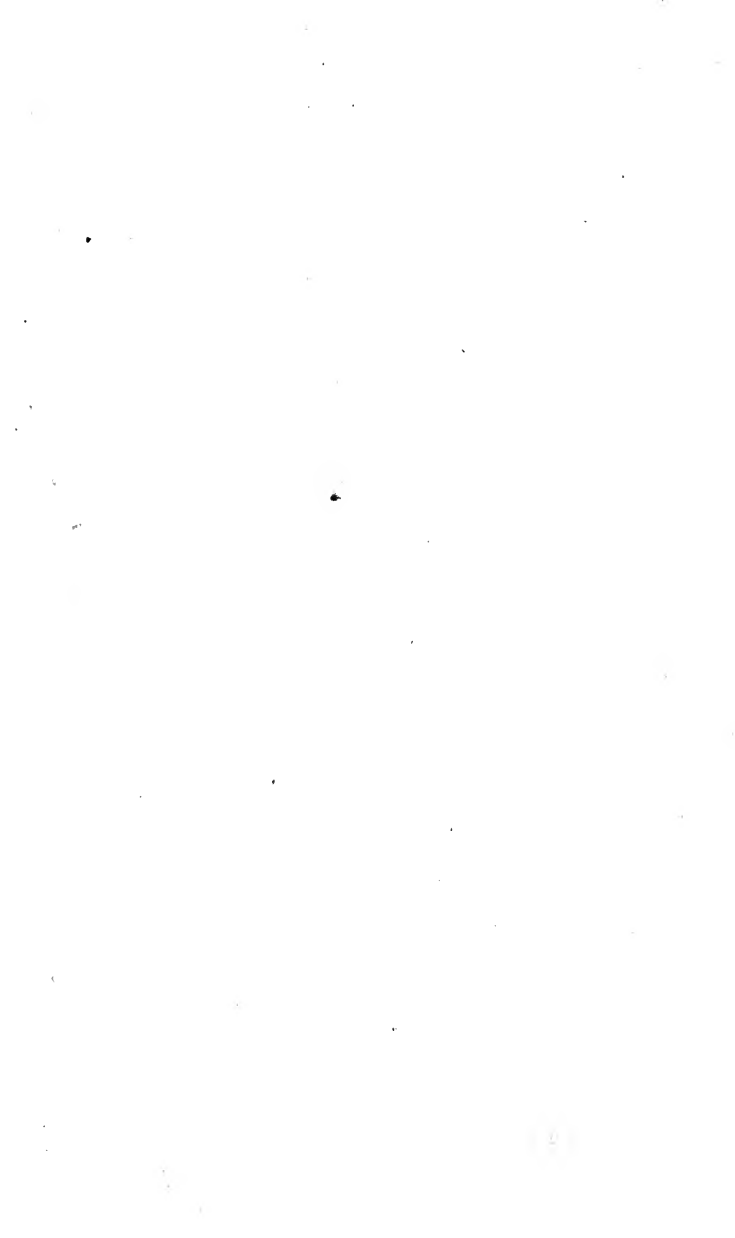
TO A CONSECRATED YOUTH.

Though pleasure's soft whisper fall sweet on thine ear,
And young fancy's bliss-lighted visions appear,
Though thou hearest the music which youth loves to hear,
O give not thy heart.

Though wealth should allure thee to kneel at his shrine,
With gifts of the ocean and gifts of the mine,
Though round thee his splendors should brilliantly shine,
O give not thy heart.

Though glory hath spread his pavilion on high,
And his rainbow-gilt temples e'en dazzle thine eye,
Though thou deemest his breast never rent with a sigh,
O give not thy heart.

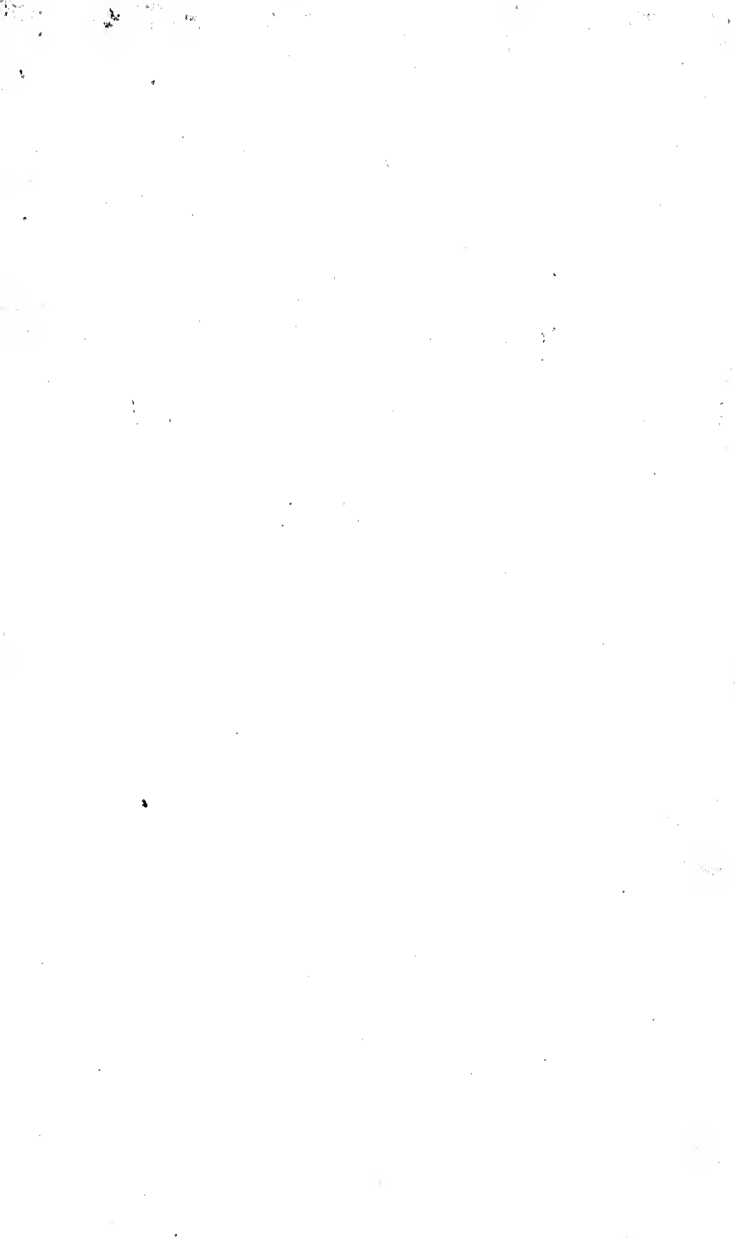
But when the kind voice of Emanuel pleads,
From the throne where he reigns, or the cross where he bleeds,
Haste thee and list ! 'tis thy God intercedes :
O give him thy heart.





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